

Sridhar Das

A Leaf in the Stream

An Autobiography



Translated by
Mary Mohanty

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A Leaf in the Stream

(An Autobiography)

With a Foreword by Gaganendra Nath Dash

Translated from the Oriya by

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Sridhar Das

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Foreword

I have always used Sarvasara Vyakarana, famous textbook on grammar written by Sridhar Das. It is a traditional grammar book par excellence, but has a refreshingly modern approach. Recently, I got an opportunity to read his autobiography *Sua Muhanra Patara*, and its English translation, *A Leaf in the Stream*.

An autobiography is normally read for three different - and unrelated - reasons: It is read because of its literary value i.e. when it is written in a style and in a language that renders it quite interesting. Secondly, it is read for its historical and anthropological value, because it either records specific events of political, social, literary, cultural significance or provides useful information on the author's contemporaries. Thirdly, it also gives an account of a person's struggle to make his way in the world.

Rarely does an autobiography combine all these three qualities. The autobiography of Sridhar Das possesses unmistakable literary value as it is written in a very simple, straightforward but lucid style and narrates many events - interesting in themselves - in an engaging manner. Further, it is also a record of the contemporary social, political and cultural history of Orissa as the author came in contact with many great men of Orissa and India - Annie Besant, Lala Lajpat Ray, Ashutosh Mukherjee, Thakkar Bapa, Utkalamani Gopabandhu, Pandit Nilakantha, Pandit Godabarish Mishra, Acharya Harihar, Godabarish Mahapatra, Gopalchandra Praharaj, Dewan Bahadur Srikrushna Mahapatra among others. He has observed some of them from very close quarters. The book will therefore immensely help one understand some of the social, political and cultural forces and counter-forces which shaped the psyche of some of the prominent players who dominated the social,

political and cultural arena at the time and assess their contribution to national life. Moreover the tone and the general presentation of the facts and events in the work reveal the author's commitment to truth; at least he narrates only what he considers to be true. Therefore, even while not disagreeing with the view that an autobiography is, in fact, a 'construction' of past events by its author, its historical and anthropological value as a 'record' can never be minimized or marginalized. This is especially true in case of the non-Oriya readers for whom the English translation has been prepared. They will find it a wealth of information.

The most interesting thing about this autobiography is that it records the struggle of a god-fearing, law abiding, patriotic and basically a good but ordinary human being who refused to part with his self-respect. He continued to cherish certain principles and values even when the future became uncertain and dire poverty stared him in the face. He had taken risks, too many and too often, even when the stakes were high. But these are not risks taken by a gambler, but ones which only a man of principle is sometimes obliged to take.

Sridhar Das describes himself as a mere leaf in the stream, floating hither and thither. But, in fact, all too often he had swum against the current. Only a man of conviction and courage, a man of strong determination can do that. After each setback instead of loosening his grip, he held on to the principles and values with greater tenacity than before. As a result he has suffered, and suffered too much. He is reticent when he talks about his many sacrifices.

These days when moral values are getting eroded fast, this book will provide future generations with the strength to dream and the courage to fight the forces of evil.

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Acknowledgements

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Mary Mohanty

A Leaf in the Stream

Childhood and School Days

I always believed that my date of birth was 1st October 1902 as this date had been entered in my school and college records. But one day I came across a copy of my horoscope. I learnt from it that I was born on a Saturday night under the sign Virgo, which was the ninth day of the month of Ashwin in the twenty-fifth regnal year of King Mukund Dev in 1309 sal. This, according to the Roman calendar, is 4th October 1901.

Those days, primary-school teachers recorded the first day of a month as the date of birth of a child for the convenience of calculating his age. Once, on looking into the admission register of a school, one inspector of the education department had remarked, "It seems mothers waited until the first day of a month to give birth to their babies. Was the delivery of babies prohibited on other days of the month?"

There was another reason for reducing the actual age of a child while recording it in admission registers. However qualified a person might be, he was considered unfit for a government job if he had crossed twenty-five years of age. It had therefore become customary to reduce the age of a child by one or two years at the time of his admission into a school, lest he should be older than twenty-five years by the time he finished his studies.

Anyway, I was later told that I would not have survived as I could not be fed mother's milk. Every day, a *bauri* woman came and breastfed me twice or thrice, and in exchange for her services, she received some money or a quantity of rice every month. Later

in life, whenever my father found fault with me, he would say that, as I had been breast-fed by a low-caste woman, my intellect had become blunted. If he had lived for a few more years, and if he had got acquainted with the story of Ambedkar's life, he would not have made a remark like this.

My father lived in abject poverty. All the farmland we owned measured no more than half an acre or twelve *gunthas*. Later, we came to possess sixteen more *gunthas* when the share of my father's elder brother was added to our property. I have heard from my father's elder brother that my grandfather possessed about fifteen acres of farmland; but, during the terrible famine, which had devastated Orissa in 1866 (the ninth regnal year of Gajapati Divyasingh Dev of Orissa), all that land was sold off in exchange for a few measures of rice and mandia. He had shown me those farmlands on several occasions. He was only twenty at the time of the famine. When I was around fourteen years old, he lost his wife and came to live in our house. He breathed his last at the age of eighty. My father, before his death in 1939, had managed to acquire twelve acres of farmland. He had received a few of these from the zamindar in return for his services.

My father had not received modern education. He had only attended the village school and received instruction according to old methods. He underwent teachers' training at Puri for a few months and then became a primary school teacher. Radhanath Ray, the famous poet, who was then the inspector of schools, had signed the certificate, which he received after completing his training. From what a teacher told me I learnt that the manner in which training was imparted to teachers in those days was quite amusing. The trainees received a stipend of two rupees a month during the period of the training. Out of that, about one rupee was spent on one's boarding and clothing. The remaining one

rupee was sent home to enable one's family to support itself. Radhanath babu himself examined the trainees after the completion of the training.

The teacher who told me of this sat for his examination at the end of the stipulated period of training. A few pupils from a primary school in Puri were brought over to test the teaching abilities of the teachers. He was to teach them arithmetic. The lesson to be taught was fraction. The pupils were town boys; they knew that he was their teacher only for an hour. They engaged in mischiefs of all kinds. They snatched the instruments, which the teacher had brought in with him. Sitting on the last bench, Radhanath babu kept a close watch on the demonstration class. And this teacher was declared to have failed whereas other examinees got through. However, he was granted a stipend and was allowed to undergo training for a few more months. The time for the next examination arrived. The same town boys, the same examiner, Radhanath babu, and the same teacher were present in the classroom. Radhanath babu sat behind the pupils. Students became noisy and unruly. The teacher felt utterly helpless. Suddenly he hit upon an idea. He went outside, brought a chakunda stick, and brought it heavily down on a pupil's back and said, "I am definitely going to fail, but I'll put an end to your mischief." Radhanath babu came up and shielding the pupil, said, "Ah, stop it, teacher. The punishment exceeds his fault."

The pupil was spared and the teacher got through the examination.

My father had undergone this kind of teachers' training. He was well versed in literature and arithmetic. He learned to write and read Bangla and Hindi through his own efforts. He had some knowledge of astrology. He could also prescribe simple herbal medicines. He possessed a book on ayurveda written by Pundit

Beharilal, which was then being distributed freely. With the help of this book, he could prepare medicines from herbs. In a way, he was 'a Jack-of-all-trades, but master of none' and very popular in villages nearby.

He taught at a lower primary school. He was the only teacher there. The total number of pupils, who regularly attended the school, was about fifteen or twenty; but there were about twenty-five names in the attendance register. He was given a stipend of six rupees once in every three months, at two rupees per month, by the district board of education. From this amount, two annas were deducted as money order fee. It was the responsibility of the villagers to feed the teacher. Every day, two measures of rice, pulses and vegetables such as spinach, brinjals, pumpkins were given to him for this purpose. I started my lessons at the school where my father was working when I was around five or six years old. My father would cook in a corner of his one-room school and we ate our meals there. At night, we would roll out a mat and go to sleep on it. Our house was only half-a-mile away from the school; so we used to go home for a night once in every five or seven days. We would take home whatever quantity of rice was left over from the provisions. It was barely sufficient for our family.

There were a few zamindars among the villagers. They had appointed one tahsildar and one sub-ordinate official to collect revenue from the tenants. The monthly salary of the tahsildar was two rupees. The records of the zamindari used to be written down on palm leaves with the help of a stylus. Sometimes tenants were either fined or simply given a beating and told off. But it was considered normal and bothered nobody. It was not that zamindars were very rich or that they led lives of luxury. But they were comparatively better off than others. Ordinary villagers did not have cots in their houses. But cots and chests made of rare

wood were found in zamindars' households. Unlike the house of a peasant, the house of a zamindar was not a thatched house. Ordinary people could hardly afford two meals of rice a day. At best, they ate hot rice at one meal time and soaked rice or mandia gruel at the other. These zamindars were the patrons of village schools.

Punishments meted out to pupils at village schools were harsh and severe. The sub-inspector of schools would come to inspect the schools once in every three to four months. He would examine the pupils and send a report about the teacher. Gradually, training methods came to be improved. A trained teacher got a salary of seven rupees. My father was regarded as a trained teacher and received this kind of salary for a year. But, later, it was decided that the training he had undergone was not the right kind of training and his salary was reduced. Of all the school sub-inspectors of the time, it is Artatrana Tripathy whom I remember vividly. One of his eyes was damaged. He was possessed of a generous and noble disposition. Whenever he came to inspect a school, he carried his food with him so that he would never become a burden on the teacher. He treated teachers and pupils alike with great courtesy. It was against his nature to ill-treat anyone. Later, his son, Jagannath Tripathy also earned fame as an official in the education department.

One day, a sub-inspector inspected our school and asked the teacher to send me to take the scholarship examination. Until this time, no pupil of the school had sat for the scholarship examination. The examination was to be held at Gop Middle Vernacular School, which lay twelve miles away from our village. My father accompanied me to Gop. The examination lasted for two days. We returned home after it was over.

My formal education started after I spent three or four years

at the lower primary school. Beginning one's studies involved a ritual: our priest, Bikei Tiadi performed a puja chanting mantras and wrote *siddhirastu* in Sanskrit on the floor, which meant, 'be successful'. He asked me to write over the letters with a piece of chalk. I was scolded as I misspelt the word *siddhi*. That day, we offered a coconut to our village deity, Lord Vinayak.

The most memorable event which took place during my school days was the coronation of George V. On the twelfth of December, 1911 we went to a dak bungalow situated some distance away, a medal hanging from a string of beads around our necks. I should mention here that we were then strangers to the practice of wearing shirts. Many did not wear even a vest. The pictures of Emperor George V and the Empress Mary were engraved on the medal. We sang a song as we marched on. The first two lines of it were:

George V is our emperor

O God, protect him with great care.

A month or so after this event took place, I sat for the scholarship examination. One day, my father had gone to the *haat*. When he returned in the evening, he found me playing near a pond making things out of a lump of clay. Father went into the pond to wash his feet. I went home, hoping that once I was with my mother I would not be scolded for playing about the in mud.

As soon as father entered the house, he said to mother, "Your virtuous son had taken the examination; but he has failed." I replied immediately, "Some fifteen or twenty students had taken the examination; only three or four would get the scholarship; all others would fail. How does it matter if I failed?" My father said, laughing, "Oh no, I was joking. You *have* won the scholarship. If you read at Kakatapur Vernacular School, you will get two rupees a month."

Four Years at the Middle Vernacular School

True, I had won a scholarship, but two rupees would not enable me to meet all my expenses. If I were to stay at the school hostel, I would have to pay two rupees and fifteen seers of rice every month. Besides, there were other expenses to meet. Instead of accommodating me at the hostel, father made another arrangement: He put me up at the house of a priest who served at the temple of Goddess Mangala. I stayed at his house, went to school on foot and continued my studies. His widowed mother, his elder brother's widow and his nephew lived in the house of the devout priest. I ate whatever they ate; only no sweets, if any was available in the house, were served to me. Two years passed by in this manner. My scholarship came to an end. At first, my father had thought to himself, 'My son had passed upper primary examination. If it were decreed in his fate to be a teacher in a lower primary school, his fate would be changed after he received upper primary basic training.' But later he had changed his decision.

The school tuition fees had been waived. If rice and some money would be paid to the priest every month, his son might pass the Middle Vernacular Examination. However, I managed to pass this examination with a lot of difficulty. When I enrolled myself at Kakatapur Vernacular School, I was wearing my hair long. Two silver bracelets were taken off my hands and were kept at home. But I wore a string of beads around my neck. Persuaded by a few friends, I shaved my head after a year. My parents had strictly instructed me that I should never eat without the string of beads around my neck. If the string of beads ever snapped, I would eat only after stringing the beads and putting it again around my neck. I had obeyed this instruction until I completed my high school studies. I do not remember having seen a string of beads around the neck of any non-brahmin boy at that time.

There was a special reason for not letting me wear my bracelets. A famine had struck the province while I was studying at the lower primary school. A man killed a school boy, threw him into the floodwaters after taking away his bracelets and his necklace. He was convicted of murder and was sentenced to deportation. After nearly twelve or fourteen years, a letter came to his father saying that he had been released and was living as a free man in the Andamans. The child had lost his life for ornaments worth only four or five rupees. The bracelets were taken off my hands out of fear that someone might attack me or kill me to take these away.

At first, there were only two teachers at the school. Four classes were held in a hall-like room. Teaching continued in the midst of terrible disturbances. This might have gone on for a year or two more if a new method of instruction had not been introduced around this time. Five teachers were appointed for four classes. The monthly salary of the head pundit was raised to thirty rupees from thirteen. Besides the head pundit, another second pundit, who had passed the vernacular examination, got appointed; he was given a salary of twenty-five rupees. Other three teachers had received middle vernacular basic training.

Divyasingh Mohanty was the head pundit of our school. I was impressed by the depth of his knowledge. He had mastered several subjects – literature, mathematics, history, and geography. He was also a very good orator. One day, Ananta Mishra, who devoted his time to spreading the message of Oriya Nationalism, delivered a lecture on Utkal Union Conference at a meeting. Our head pundit also delivered a lecture at the same meeting and people found his lecture more admirable. However, later I came to know that he was not a man of good character. The second pundit, Gadadhar Mohapatra, belonged to a village near Puri where

brahmins enjoyed revenue-free land. He had passed the Vernacular Mastership Examination; besides, he had received the title, 'Kavyatirtha' in recognition of his knowledge of Sanskrit. These two pundits were not on the best of terms. Divyasingh Mohanty meted out severe punishment to his students. Whoever became even a little absentminded was never spared. I myself received a beating from him on a number of occasions. Of course, I was punished not for neglecting my studies but for dozing off in the class. Every day, before going to school, I took soaked rice. So I fell into a doze in the class after sometime. Once, while I was dozing, the head pundit, a cane in hand, hid himself near a bench and suddenly landed a few strokes on my back. As I looked here and there, confused, he came out to the front from the other side and said, "Oh, what a big scorpion bit you." My fellow pupils burst into laughter; I cried and kept quiet. On some days such incidents occurred more than once.

While teaching literature, Divyasingh babu drew examples from many different sources. He used to discuss the meanings of certain words in great detail. He would explain the subtle difference between the meanings of similar words such as, 'Multitude' and 'Infantry.' He had a Bangla dictionary titled *Prakritibada Dictionary*. He had expanded his vocabulary with the help of this book. His method of teaching was certainly not modern, but now I realise that I had benefited from it immensely.

I had purchased a book titled *Saraswata Grammar*, hoping to learn Sanskrit from the second pundit. I had learnt a little grammar from it, which is still fresh in my memory. But later I realized that learning Sanskrit did not help me much in my career.

At that time, we were only four pupils in class six. This was the highest class in the middle vernacular school. The punishment meted out by the head pundit happened to be the severest in this

class. Some pupils were ordered to stand up on the bench on one leg for hours together. Beating with a cane was quite common. Sometimes, a pupil had to sit in a posture that made him look like a chair. This was a cruel punishment. One had to sit with his back against the wall, his thighs remaining at right angles to his calves, holding his ears. Remaining in this position for even five minutes caused one excruciating pain. Tears rolled from one's eyes and mucus flowed out from one's nose. Oh God, may even an enemy not be punished in this manner!

Most of the students of our class left the school, one after another, because they found this inhuman system of punishment too much. The pundit remarked, "It's good. The chaff got blown away". I and another one remained for we were 'grains of rice.' But after being subjected to this kind of punishment for a few more days, these two 'grains of rice' also chose to behave like chaff. At last, the class was left with no student at all. The scholarship examination was two to three months ahead. I left for home.

After about twenty days, the head pundit himself came to our house. He had a talk with my father. He assured him that I would not be given any punishment. Besides, it was decided that henceforth I would stay at the hostel. Both father and the pundit realised that I had trouble in staying at the priest's house. I came back to school. After some days the other 'grain of rice' also returned. But, shortly afterwards, he was ordered first to stand up on the bench, then to stand up on one leg and at last on his toes. I must say that he possessed extraordinary patience and tolerance. Later in life, this friend of mine became a primary school teacher after undergoing middle vernacular basic training.

The school had no hostel. There was only a kitchen. The students slept in the school at night. The two pundits, who had

come from another province, joined two benches at night and slept on them. The students slept on mats. During day time, their clothes and other personal belongings were kept under the benches. No cook was appointed. The brahmin students used to do the cooking; the non-brahmin students fetched water, chopped vegetables and ground spices. They also washed the utensils of the pundits after they had eaten. The resident of the head pundit was located about a mile away from the school at village Srirampore. He used to go home every day and seldom stayed at the school.

After I studied at this school for a year or two, an important incident occurred. The collector of Puri, Manmath Krushnadeva, came on a tour and stayed at the police station. The school was adjacent to the police station. Moreover, the school came under the administration of the District Board. At that time, the collector was the chief of the District Board. The Montague-Chelmsford Administrative Reforms had not taken place yet. So, in a way, he was the all- in -all of the school. He came to inspect the school. Perhaps the head pundit was aware of this beforehand. So he had written a poem extolling the virtues of the collector and had taught two girl students to sing this. Those two girls were maharis' daughters and there were no other girl students in the school. Receiving scholarships, they had come from the local lower primary girls' school. As soon as the collector sahib entered the school, they sang the song and garlanded him. The sahib inspected the school and left. Next day, these two girls had to leave the school. They were informed that they would receive their scholarships staying at home.

At that time there lived a few maharis at Kakatapur. They served goddess Mangala; they sang and danced on the dais of the temple. They had been given farmlands and property in return

for their services. This practice has ceased to exist. Now co-education system prevails at all levels - from primary schools to the universities in our country. But this incident reveals how it was considered an offence to teach boys and girls together even in higher primary classes at that time. A high school has recently been set up at Kakatapur; a college has also been established there. Boys and girls are studying together. What great changes have taken place!

In December 1915, I went to Puri to take the middle vernacular scholarship examination, accompanied by father and the head pundit. The centre for the examination was Puri Zilla School. We stayed at a rented house. Some other examinees were staying near our house. One of them was trying to memorise a few lines from a textbook by reading these loudly. I was disturbed by the noise he was making. Later I came to know that he had failed in the examination.

The examination was over. The thought that his son would undergo middle vernacular basic training and that he would receive a salary amounting to nine rupees made my father happy. He would be counted as someone among many. In fact, he had every reason to feel happy. At that time, hardly ten percent people were literate. Among these, people who had passed the middle vernacular examination might have constituted less than even one percent. It was no small matter to be one of them.

I sat idle at home after the examination. It was not certain whether I would study further or not. My father wanted me to work as a primary school teacher. A child, who hailed from a nearby village, was then studying at a minor school in Cuttack district staying in the house of one of his relatives. Subjects taught at minor or middle English and middle vernacular schools were the same. Only English was not taught in Middle Vernacular

schools. When a pupil of Middle English school came during holidays and sang fluently "One morn I met a lame man in a lane" etc. before me, I bowed before the depth of his knowledge. I brought *First Book of Reading* and read a few pages from it with his help. Later, he underwent middle vernacular training and became a primary school teacher. I have heard that after retirement from his job he is now receiving a pension.

I remember another classmate of mine. As he got detained for two years in each class, by the time I got into class six, he was still reading in class four. Seven or eight years later, I saw his name in the gazette in the list of pupils who had passed middle vernacular examination. I thought that this pupil might be someone else having the same name. But, later, I learnt that he was none other than my old classmate. How he had managed to pass the tough middle vernacular examination was a mystery to me. This mystery was unraveled by one of his teachers.

At that time, according to the rules, if a student failed in any subject for a few marks, the district inspector of schools came to that school and tested that student again in that subject. If the results of that examination were satisfactory, the student was allowed to get through. The friend I just mentioned had failed only in arithmetic. So the district inspector informed the head pundit that the student would face a test relating to that subject. The head pundit knew the district inspector sent for the student and wrote down five questions. The district inspector took rest after his meal. The student sat beside him and wrote out answers to the questions. The pundit had no worries. He had no doubt that his student would give correct answers to at least two out of the five questions. This meant that he would secure forty out of hundred marks. After taking rest, the district inspector collected the answer script from the student. The head pundit and the second

pundit sat near him. He handed the answer script to the head pundit and asked him to evaluate it. The answers in the script shocked the head pundit. One of the answers to those two questions was incorrect. What would he do? The second pundit signalled to the head pundit by pressing his hand. He marked the answer correct and awarded the candidate forty marks. The district inspector left taking the answer script with him. For many days, both the pundits feared that the district inspector would re-evaluate the script and they would be found out and get punished. But they were lucky. Luck was also in my friend's favour. He passed.

Puri Zilla School

The results of the middle vernacular examination came out. I had qualified for a scholarship, which made my father as joyous as it made him worried. So he moved the goal, which he had set for his son, higher. He wondered if his son could read upto matriculation. He had received a scholarship, and there was simply no question of not accepting it. Another pupil, Somanath Sarangi, who had been awarded a scholarship from the Kakatapur Middle Vernacular School in 1913, was reading at Puri Zilla School. My father consulted him. The discussion with him boosted my father's confidence. He decided to send me to Puri Zilla School. The scholarship amounted to four rupees per month and it would be given for four years. According to Bihar Orissa Education Board Act, I would also be entitled to free-studentship. Things could take whatever course they liked after four years. First, let these years pass. With this in mind, I set off for Puri to pursue my studies at Puri Zilla School. But the decision on which class I would be admitted into depended on my knowledge of English. The headmaster, Dasarathi Panigrahi tested my command of English.

I had read only a few pages of the *First Book of Reading*. He was not satisfied with my answers and admitted me into seventh (A) class, which is equivalent to class five in a modern school. But at the same time he consoled me saying that I would get double promotion to class five (seventh in a modern school) at the end of the year, provided my standard of English improved in this class. This did indeed happen. But there I lost two years unnecessarily on account of my inadequate knowledge of English.

In the mean time, the names of classes got altered. The class into which I was admitted came to be called class five. At the end of the year, receiving double promotion, I was sent up to class seven. Actually, these two were minor classes. So, by the time I was promoted to class nine, my scholarship was coming to an end. I appealed to the headmaster, Dasarathi Panigrahi, saying that, as I would not be able to pursue my studies without a scholarship, he should help me getting admitted to the training school. He wrote recommending me to the headmaster of the training school, Chandramohan Maharana, and assured me that he would admit me into the training school at the beginning of the next academic year. But, around this time, the Bihar and Orissa government decided to extend the middle vernacular scholarship to another year and its amount was raised to five rupees. This improved my financial situation and gave me the hope that I would complete class ten. Now-a-days, if you ask a student of a minor school about his aim in life, he would say, 'I would take the I.A.S. examination after passing B.A. or M.A'; another would say that he would study medicine or become an engineer. Yet another would say that he would go to England or America to pursue higher studies. But, those days, let alone someone like me, even children who belonged to far more affluent families, never thought about their future. Our exposure was extremely limited. So, I had no

option but to take the future as it came. At that time, we could get commodities at a very low price. Like me, those who were staying in the hostel had to pay four or five rupees per month towards mess charges and about two rupees towards monthly hostel rent. When I was a student of class nine, I became the monitor of the hostel. So I was exempted from paying the hostel rent till I left school. By the time I came to study in class eleven, I stopped receiving the scholarship; but, according to the rule of the education department, I enjoyed free-studentship. After I was admitted into Puri Zilla School, I had to repeat the courses at middle vernacular school for the first two years. I spent most of my time learning English. So, it was not difficult on my part to stand first in the class. Only once I could not top the list in the annual examination on account of my illness. Otherwise, I came first in the examination and received prizes every year. Those days, an English essay competition was held for students of the four upper classes every year. The student who secured the first position in this competition was awarded a silver medal. The name of this medal was, "Harischandra Ghosh Memorial Medal." Fortunately, I was awarded this medal for three consecutive years – 1919, 1920 and 1921. On one side of the medal was inscribed the name of the person in whose memory it had been instituted, and on other was inscribed, 'Awarded to Sridhar Das, Puri Zilla School for essay-writing' and the year. Besides this, I was awarded a silver medal for topping the list of successful students of Puri district in 1922. On it was inscribed: 'Puri Zilla School, 1922. Babu Narayan Das Banerjee's Daya Medal to Sridhar Das.' Harischandra Ghosh was a famous advocate and zamindar; but I did not know who this Narayan Das Banerjee, in whose memory this medal was given, was. I also do not know whether these two medals are still being awarded every year. When I joined Puri

Zilla School, it was under the jurisdiction of Calcutta University. Later, it came to be affiliated to Patna University after Patna University was set up. As far as I can remember, the students of Bihar and Orissa appeared at the matriculation examination according to the new syllabus of Patna University for the first time in 1921. Perhaps Puri Zilla School became a centre for matriculation examination in 1915. The six years from 1916 to 1921 were eventful not only in Indian history but world history. The First World War began in 1914, and peace was restored in 1918. The famous Non-Co-operation Movement covers the period from 1919 to 1921. On 11 November 1918, at eleven o'clock, silence was observed for two minutes to mark the occasion of the end of the First World War. Earlier, while the war was going on, one day, the teachers took us to Jagannath temple and made us pray for the victory of the English in obedience to the instruction of the government. I remember one line of that prayer, '*Win win, you Lord, George V.*' Our teacher, Maguni babu who was a very patriotic man, distributed sweets among the students when peace came to be restored. I will say more about him later. These six years witnessed events like the trial of the unrivalled leader of Orissa, Pundit Gopabandhu, and his acquittal in the court of the then deputy magistrate of Khurda, Suresh Chandra Bose (Netaji Subhas's brother), the Non-Co-operation Movement led by Congress, Mahatma Gandhi's visit to Orissa, boycott of government institutions, the rise and fall of the open-air school at Satyabadi. All these exerted a tremendous influence on students all over Orissa. The students of Puri Zilla School were no exception. In 1921, the well-known open-air school at Satyabadi was closed down; national schools were set up at different places. After Mahatma Gandhi's visit to Puri, many students of Puri Zilla School left their studies. Around this time I too had left school

for a few days; but advised by the headmaster, I again attended school. I got through the matriculation examination in 1922. That year, the results of our school were good beyond expectation. I and Srikrushna Mohanty (Faka) stood first and second in Orissa division and received a scholarship amounting to fifteen rupees. Another four students received scholarships amounting to ten rupees each. All except one had passed. We held a feast in the school on this occasion. Amidst the joy and celebration of that day, one servant stole a hundred rupee note from pundit Ananta Rath. This caused much sorrow. At that time, about three hundred students studied at the school. The number of teachers was about twenty. Seats remained vacant in many classes. In 1921, there were only twenty-two students in class eleven. The relationship between teachers and pupils was very cordial. It would not be an exaggeration to say that every teacher knew every student very well. Most of the teachers happened to be Bengalis. Some of them could not speak Oriya fluently. The number of Oriya teachers was very small. During those six years, the school had four headmasters.

Dasarathi Panigrahi, who was the headmaster when I enrolled myself at the school, hailed from Barunei in Balasore district. He was very good at mathematics and had written a few books on mathematics, which were published by Macmillan and were approved as textbooks. Chandramohan Maharana who belonged to Remuna in Balasore district, succeeded him. It seemed there was no subject in which he was not an expert. He had a hard exterior but his heart was soft like a flower. Our good fortune in having someone like him as our headmaster did not last long. He was transferred after a few months. Our next headmaster was Upendra Narayan Duttgupta. He also displayed mastery of all subjects. He possessed a thorough knowledge of English, Bangla

and Oriya literatures, and his knowledge of Sanskrit amazed even Sanskrit pundits. He was very fond of reading books on astrology, religion and philosophy. His love for books, his winning manners and ideal character exerted a tremendous influence on students. A couple of sentences uttered by him with a grave demeanour would make any wicked student tremble. Prasanna Kumar Ganguly succeeded Upendra babu. He was not able to speak Oriya, but he managed by speaking Bangla mixed with Oriya. He won over the teachers by his gentle disposition and generosity. He loved students like his own children. He had no foes; and he looked upon everyone as his friend. In fact, a soft-spoken person has no enemies. Everyone was charmed by the way he talked. He left for his heavenly abode while living in Puri.

Other teachers whom I can never forget include Baidyanath Ghosal, Chintamani Kar, Radhamohan Ghosh, Purnachandra Dasgupta, Kesablal Saha, Bhairav Chandra Dutta, Harekrishna Mahapatra, Maguni Das, and Anugraha Nayak. Bhairav babu was the assistant headmaster. He had written a textbook on Indian history, but, in fact, he taught mathematics to the students of the upper classes. Maguni Das had passed I.A. He was nicknamed 'Bhuyan'. This nickname has a very interesting origin. While teaching, Maguni babu was in the habit of asking, after uttering a sentence or two, "Do you follow me, aan?" Uttered quickly in Oriya, these words sounded like 'Bhuyan.' So the students called him 'Bhuyan.' Gradually, he came to be known all over the Puri town by this name. In his devotion to the British government, he was second to none. People all over India objected to the visit of the Prince of Wales; but Maguni babu journeyed all the way to Patna to see him. He distributed sweets among the students when the English came victorious in the First World War. Pundit Gopabandhu was arrested for of having published a news item

entitled 'Dangerous if true' about police atrocities in the *Samaj*. Maguni babu gave evidence against Gopabandhu at Khurda court. He predicted that Gopabandhu would be sentenced to at least three months in prison. But Gopabandhu was acquitted by the judge, Suresh Chandra Bose, and Maguni babu became an object of ridicule and contempt. His eldest son, Purna Chandra Dash, left his teaching job, and brought out a monthly called *Shakti*. As this magazine took an anti-government stand and supported the Congress, his relationship with his father turned bitter.

Of all the pundits, Mahamahopadhyaya Sadashiva Mishra has left an indelible impression on my mind. We felt ourselves utterly worthless in the presence of his towering personality. He deserves a permanent place among the great sons of Orissa on account of his achievements. After Pathani Samanta, he was the only person in Orissa, who had received the title Mahamahopadhyaya. He had written a research work titled *Sri Jagannath Temple* in Bangla. He had also published the biography of Jagannath Das, and a few devotional songs in Oriya. His best-known work is a religious text in Sanskrit titled *Kalyapaddharmasarvasva*. I am sure that, when Fakir Mohan portrayed the president Sadashiva Vidyabhusan in the chapter 'Panditasabha' (Meeting of Scholars) in his novel, *Mamu* (*The Maternal Uncle*), he had Sadashiva Mishra in mind. However, students always made fun of Sanskrit pundits, and, at times, even Sadashiva Mishra was not spared.

Pundit Jagannath Rath Kavyakantha taught us Oriya and Sanskrit. He was very friendly with the students. He knew their vices and virtues, and guided them accordingly. In fact, to many of his students, he was their friend, philosopher and guide. He had written a few interesting story books like *Stories from the Upanishad*, *New Ideal Stories*. During the Dussera festival, he

offered worship to goddess Bimala. I was very close to him. I had the good fortune of seeing him two or three months before he breathed his last at the residence of his son, Nilakantha Rath, in Bhubaneswar.

Pundit Bholanath Ganguly, who was also a Sanskrit scholar, was our Bangla teacher. Although I was not studying Bangla, I was deeply devoted to him. He was very affectionate towards me. Once, by chance, I met him in Puri about twenty years ago. By that time he had retired from his job. We reminisced about the past and shed tears. Alas, he has left for his heavenly abode.

Puri Zilla School was shifted to its new building during these six years. The old building came to be occupied by the Sanskrit College. The then Lieutenant-Governor of Bihar-Orissa province, Sir Edward Gait inaugurated the new building. The students were fed sumptuously on that day.

When I was a student of Puri Zilla School, I had the good fortune of coming in contact with a few eminent leaders of Orissa. I came to know Pundit Gopabandhu Das, Acharya Harihar Das, the poet, Padmacharan Pattnaik, advocate Jagabandhu Singh, Lakshminarayan Sahu, the social worker, Munshif Lakshminarayan Pattnaik, Pundit Lingaraj Mishra, the principal of the Sanskrit college, and, above all, Madhusudan Das, who was the greatest of them all.

I also got an opportunity to see some famous leaders like Sri Lingaraj Panigrahi (the Ex-judge), Sri Chandrashekhar Behera (president of the Utkal Conference), barrister Sri Biswanath Mishra, when I worked as a volunteer at the Utkal Conference which was organized at Puri in 1919. One day, a conference of the princes was held at Puri. On our headmaster's orders, we collected donations from some of the kings for the poor students of our school. On that occasion, the king of Chikiti, Radhamohan

Rajendradeva, hosted a dinner for us and gave us a hard-bound volume of plays edited by him. His writing skills were of a very high order, though he spoke Oriya with a heavy Ganjam accent.

Thus, it can be said that the foundation of my life was laid at Puri Zilla School. The fond memories of the teachers who had shaped me, the great men who had exerted a powerful influence on me either directly or indirectly and my dear classmates who loved me, even those who disliked me or were jealous of me at that time, can never be erased from my mind.

I must mention here the generosity of one particular student, Sri Ramakrushna Ramanuja Das. He was the disciple of Sri Gadadhar Ramanuja Das, the mahant of the famous Emara Math and his successor. He read in class eight and stayed at the hostel for a few days.

He often needed my help with his studies. He always shared with me the food that the devotees offered to Lord Jagannath, which he brought for his breakfast. He was not fated to appear for the matriculation examination. His studies came to an end at class nine. Some months passed since he left our school. One day, his servant came and gave me five rupees saying that the younger mahant had sent the money. As I could not figure out why he should send me the money, I did not want to accept it. But the man said, "If you return it, he would feel offended. Please keep it; I will find out why he has sent it to you." Later, he told me, "While studying at school, the younger mahanta had borrowed two annas from you. So he had sent you five rupees."

I did not have a single paisa with me on that day. I had completely forgotten when I had lent him two annas. These five rupees brought me great relief. Unfortunately, Ramakrushna breathed his last before being raised to the throne of the Emara Math. His younger brother, Srinibas Ramanuja Das became the mahant.

The Non-Cooperation Movement gathered momentum during the years I spent as a student at Puri Zilla School. Mahatma Gandhi emerged as the undisputed leader of the Indian National Congress. The call for non-cooperation found an enthusiastic response throughout the country. It was a matter of pride to put on *khadar* clothes. Groups of children sang a Hindi song, carrying national flags, on which the picture of a spinning-wheel had been painted:

Swaraj will certainly come, Brothers!

Break the chains of slavery,

Sons of India!

Why disgrace yourself by

Embracing slavery?

Schools, cutcherries and councils are nothing but lies,

Don't let yourself be deceived by these.

Swaraj will surely come- boycott schools, boycott colleges, leave cutcherries, burn foreign clothes - this stirred our hearts.

It was the Dola holidays in 1921. I was at home. There I heard that Mahatma Gandhi would be visiting Orissa. A meeting would be held at Sakhigopal and Mahatma Gandhi would address it. In our minds, the Mahatma had been transformed into a god. How could one resist the temptation to see him and listen to him? I covered about thirty-five miles on foot and reached Sakhigopal. The meeting was held. The Mahatma was to give his lecture in Hindi; I thought I would not be able to understand anything he said. But the Hindi which he spoke was not at all difficult to follow. Besides, Gopabandhu translated his speech into Oriya.

The Mahatma left for Puri from Satyabadi. That day, the Sakhigopal railway station teemed with people. I also went to Puri by the same train in which the Mahatma travelled. Like hundreds of other passengers that day, I also had not bothered to buy a ticket.

Instead of going to the hostel, I went straight to Swaraj

Ashram. I could not decide whether I should give up my studies. One day, I sought pundit Jagannath Rath's advice. He said, "I can't suggest anything specific to you. The non-co-operation movement is gaining momentum. You might be swept away by the current; but this may affect your career. So what course of action should I ask you to adopt?"

Many conflicting thoughts crossed my mind. I neither went to school nor stayed at the Swaraj Ashram. I left for home.

After about twelve days, the Oriya pundit of Puri Zilla School, Ananta Rath arrived at our house. He said, "Upendra babu (our headmaster) has sent me. I have come to take you with me to Puri. Once you get there, my responsibilities will be over."

I had no option but to accompany him. But I could not pluck up enough courage to meet Upendra babu. Two days later, a peon of the school saw me and took me to the school. Upendra babu offered me a seat in his office and tried to find out what I was planning to do. I shared all my doubts with him. I told him that one should give up one's studies, that it was necessary to drive the British away and to make our country independent.

Upendra babu heard me out patiently. He asked, "If you really want to serve the country, it would be unjust on my part to dissuade you from doing so; but, tell me, what is your goal?"

I replied boldly, "To renounce self-interest and serve the nation."

Upendra babu laughed, "How will you serve the country? What do you own that you will renounce it? Motilal Nehru, Chittaranjan Das, Mahatma Gandhi and other leaders have wealth, intelligence and power. They are serving the nation giving up their comforts. What do you possess? You need to look after your own interests first; thereafter I shall be glad if you give up these."

I thought the matter over throughout the night. Next day, I

went to Upendra babu and said, "I will do as you say. I will continue my studies."

Memories of some other incidents which took place during the years I spent at Puri Zilla School come to my mind. Those days, there were only three high schools in Puri district: Puri Zilla School, Khurda High School and the newly set up Satyabadi High School. Pundit Gopabandhu Das had established Satyabadi High School with the aim of "making students human beings in the true sense of the term." Many called it a forest-school, because its classes were held in the groves of chhuriana trees. Sir Edward Gait, Sir Ashutosh Mukherjee and many other eminent persons lavished praise on this school highly. The school aimed to mould the students' character and awaken patriotism in their hearts rather than merely imparting instruction to them. Students from all over Orissa including many from the feudatory states came to study here. This school boasted the highest number of students, about five hundred in all. About two hundred and fifty students studied in Puri Zilla School, which was managed by the British government itself, and Khurda High School had fewer students. Many teachers at Satyabadi High School had M.A. degree. There was only one teacher in Puri Zilla School who had passed M.A. His name was Padmacharan Pattanaik, and he hailed from Khurda. Drawn by its popularity, I visited Satyabadi School a number of times. Some friends of mine studied there. In fact, I liked the method of teaching that had been adopted at Satyabadi School. The discipline of the students, their punctuality and the relationship between teachers and students greatly impressed me. Students would get up early in the morning, finish their morning ablutions and then offer up the following prayer:

*"Jnanamaya lokeswara mangala nidana sarbabyapi
tabadeshe charachar hi."*

“You are full of knowledge, the Lord of all and the cause of well-being. You are omnipresent and at your instance, everything that is good happens to all animate and inanimate beings.”

Pundit Nilakantha Das had taken this from the *Upanishads* and rendered it into Oriya. The teachers also joined students in games such as wrestling bouts. Teachers and students interacted with each other day in and day out. But at Puri Zilla School we came into contact with our teachers only from 10 A.M. to 4 P.M. every day. At other times we had no contact at all with them. I always paid my respects to Pundit Nilakantha, Pundit Godabarisha, Hari babu (Acharya Harihar Das), Pundit Basudeva Mohapatra, Tamil Sir (I do not remember his name, he was called Tamil sir as he was the only Tamilian there.) from a distance.

After Mahatma Gandhi visited Orissa in 1921, this school refused to have anything to do with the government. The high school was transformed into a national school. It is hard to say whether our country gained or lost from this decision.

However, I took both matriculation as well as school leaving certificate examinations in 1922 and passed both. I received two certificates for the hardships I had subjected myself to during twelve long years.

School Leaving Certificate Examination

Matriculation and school leaving certificate examinations were held in January and February 1922 respectively. As per the rules in force at the time, if a student so desired, he could sit for both the examinations. I did so. That year, a few printing mistakes had crept into the arithmetic paper. We brought this to the notice of one of our teachers. He advised us to send a letter pointing out these to the University and a copy of the same to a newspaper. It was published in the newspaper, *The Oriya*, and the names of

students who had written it were mentioned.

The school leaving certificate examination was conducted only for three or four years. It offered more subjects than the matriculation examination. We also had to face an oral test in English. In 1922, the year in which we appeared at this examination, P.O. Whitlock, professor in the Department of English at Ravenshaw College had come as our examiner.

I secured second place in Bihar and Orissa in this examination, gaining distinction in three subjects. All the five students of our school, who had taken the school leaving certificate examination, got through. Only one scholarship amounting to twenty rupees was available for the Bihar and Orissa province. So I and, one of my friends, Srikrushna Mohanty (Faka) received fifteen rupees each as scholarship.

The results came out before April. I was not sure whether I would study in a college or not. So I began looking around for a salaried job. At the time, three categories of clerks were employed in the cutcherry of the collectorate. These were: non-remunerative probationers, remunerative probationers, and clerks whose jobs were confirmed. Many had to work as probationers, non-remunerative or remunerative, for some years before they were confirmed in their posts. I came to know that two or three posts of remunerative probationers were lying vacant. I wanted to apply for one of these. I was very hopeful that I would get this job carrying a salary of twenty rupees. Sri Dayanidhi Das was the collector, and he was in charge of recruitment. His son, Nimai was my classmate and had passed the matriculation examination with us. The collector knew me as Nimai's friend. So, I was sure he would be considerate towards me. I started walking down to the cutcherry, an application in my pocket, around eleven A. M. It was terribly hot. I passed through a grove of casuarina trees; the

post office could be seen from there. On my way, I ran into Acharya Harihara, who was walking from the opposite side. I stopped and bowed to him. He asked me, "My son, where are you going in this scorching heat?" I did not want to tell him the truth, so I said that I was going to the post office. He said, "I felt glad when I came to know that you have passed. Have you tried to find a job?" I again told him a lie, "No. If there is any job, do tell me about it so that I can try to get it." The application was lying in my pocket. As if he could see into my heart, Acharya said, "No, no, don't bother. You may get a probationership at the collectorate." I felt utterly ashamed of myself. Acharya changed the topic of our conversation. I walked back to the hostel of Puri Zilla School with him. After I took leave of Acharya, I felt as if I had escaped an acutely embarrassing situation. I tore up the letter of application and threw it away.

I always felt that Acharya Harihara could read other people's minds. It was as if he was possessed of supernatural powers. During British rule, titles such as Raysahib, Raybahadur, Khan Sahib, Khan Bahadur were conferred on eminent Indians if they were loyal to the British. They were also awarded Kaijer-e-Hind gold, silver, bronze medals. One day, the Mahant of Emara Math, Gadhadhar Ramanuja Das, was awarded a Kaijer-e-Hind silver medal. A news item relating to this was published in the *Samaj*, which had been contributed by none other than Acharya Harihara himself. It was written in a satirical vein and read as follows: Pleased with the work of the Mahanta, the government mulled over ways of rewarding him. Instead of conferring a title on him, a medal was awarded to him. As he happens to be a Mahanta, he counts the holy beads of a string. Now it would be convenient to repeat the name of God counting holy beads, the medal attached to the string.' A couple of days after this news was published, I came across Acharya. He said that he was on his way to the

Mahanta to ask for a donation for the widows' ashram. I said, "Will he give you a donation after being ridiculed by you?" Acharya said, "I am not asking anything for myself. There was nothing false in what was published in the *Samaj*. You will see, he will surely make a contribution." When we met after three days, he said, laughing, "Do you know? That day, the Mahanta donated one hundred rupees for the widows' ashram."

In the mean time, I went on applying to most of the courses offered for those who had passed the matriculation examination. I sent an application along with six rupees for taking admission in Ravenshaw collage. I also sent an application for studying agriculture in a college and another application for studying at Patna Engineering School. But I really wanted to study I. A. or I. Sc. at Ravenshaw collage. Of course, for me, thinking of studying at Ravenshaw was like a dwarf wishing to catch the moon. Ravenshaw college had been recently shifted to Chauliaganj. These days, the area lying between Chauliaganj and Buxibazar is so very crowded. But, those days, this part of the town was lonely and covered with sand. It was also overgrown with cactus bushes. Everybody was scared of going alone from the station into the town. The college stood isolated from the rest of the town. Of course, a few shops were set up after the college had come up. College students patronised these. Around three hundred students then studied at the college. About ninety percent of the students who stayed in the hostels were children of kings or zamindars. If one stayed in a hostel, one had to spend at least twenty-two rupees month. Most of the people in those days were farmers, and growing paddy was their main source of income. The price of one *varana* of paddy was about ten rupees. So, one had to sell around two and a half *varanas* of paddy every month to be able to educate one's child. How many ordinary people could afford to sell twenty-five

varanas of paddy in a year for educating a child? I knew I would not receive a single paisa from home. My only source of income was a scholarship amounting to fifteen rupees. I had come with a recommendation letter from Padmacharan Pattanaik, poet and advocate, to Parija sahib. Lambert sahib was the principal of the college at the time. Parija sahib was respected by one and all. I gave him the recommendation letter from Padmacharan babu and explained my situation to him. He said, "I can get you admitted to the college and arrange two or three rupees by way of financial assistance." This did not encourage me much. I had brought another letter from Pundit Jagannath Rath addressed to Chakradhar Mishra, who ran a big timber business at Mangalabag. He made arrangements for putting me up in a lodging house, where his employees stayed. So I did not have to spend about five rupees every month on accommodation. The tuition fee of the college was six rupees. I could walk to and from the college. But this arrangement was attended by several inconveniences, too. The dinner time at the lodging house could never be fitted into my college timings; again, it would be inconvenient for me to work at my studies sitting in a timber depot. In spite of these, as something was always better than nothing, I decided to settle for this arrangement. Two days later, Chakradhar babu showed me a telegram and said, "You have received a scholarship of twenty rupees to study in Bihar Engineering School. Join immediately. At least you can become a sub-overseer after two years. You can become an overseer after completing three years of study. What is the use of passing I. A. or B.A. undergoing so much hardship? Even if you pass your examination, you will not land a job immediately and will wander around as an unemployed man." I readily accepted his proposal. I could not rely on the assurance that Parija sahib had given me. I decided to travel to Patna and

study engineering there. But what about my travelling expenses? I was worried. As if he could read my thoughts, Chakradhar babu said, "Oh, are you worried about the expenses? I shall bear your travelling expenses. After you join the school, you will immediately receive the scholarship money." At the time of my matriculation examination, Chakradhar Mishra had given me ten rupees to enable me to pay my examination fees at the request of Jagannath Rath. This time, too, he gave me twenty rupees to enable me to make a trip to Patna.

Two Years at Bankipur Bihar National College

Till now, Cuttack was the farthest place I had travelled to from my home. Was it easy on my part to travel all the way to Patna by myself? I sought Gopalchandra Praharaj's advice. He understood my problems and keeping my resources in view, he advised me, "Take a passenger train from Cuttack station, and go to Howrah. Spend the night there in some *dharmasala* and, in the morning, board a Patna-bound train. You will reach Patna station at night. Next morning, take an *ekka* and go to the engineering college. Around forty Oriya students are studying there. Once you get there, you won't face any difficulties". I purchased a ticket and boarded the train from Cuttack station. On the way I ate bread and curry. Arum, pumpkin and lot of chilies had been put in the curry. I suffered from dysentery on my way to Howrah. After arriving there, I went to a *dharmasala* taking the help of a coolie. I brought medicine worth four annas from a homeopathy shop nearby. I took two doses of it and slept. I was lucky. The medicine cured me of my stomach ailment and brought me a lot of relief.

I came to back Howrah station around eight in the morning. I was carrying a small rattan-box with me. It was not possible to go to the booking counter, the box in hand. So, keeping the box at a

distance, I went up to one counter. There were several counters. I tried three counters in order to find out at which counter tickets for Patna were being sold. At the same time I kept a close watch over my box. At one counter, I asked for a ticket to Patna. The lady sitting in the counter enquired whether I meant Patna City or Patna Junction. I did not know that there were two different stations called Patna City and Patna Junction. I said, "Patna City". In this way, I managed to buy a ticket and boarded the train.

I stayed awake all night, for fear that somebody might steal my box. I was also afraid that I might be asleep when the train would reach Patna City station and miss it.

The train pulled into Patna City station around four o'clock in the morning. It was a very small station. Kerosene lamps were burning weakly on the lampposts of the platform. The station was not crowded. About ten passengers disembarked there and a few passengers boarded the train. I got off the train. Patna was the capital of Bihar-Orissa province. Could this small station be the place from where people came into and left Patna? When day broke, I asked some gentlemen the way to the engineering school. They told me that I should have got down at Patna Junction instead of Patna City. Anyway, I could take an *ekka* and go to the engineering school. The *ekka* driver demanded two and half rupees. I had no alternative but to agree and got into the *ekka*. This was my first experience of journey by an *ekka*. The *ekka* reached its destination. The Oriya students greeted me warmly and made all arrangements to make me feel at home. The *ekka*-man was compelled to accept one and a half rupees. I bathed in the Ganga along with some Oriya students, ate at the lodging and took rest. The same afternoon, I was admitted to the engineering school. Classes were to be attended from the very next day. The principal of the school and the superintendent of the workshop were sahibs.

The name of the principal was Walford. The other teachers were Bengalis. Perhaps they included a couple of Biharis. We finished our morning ablutions and breakfast before seven in the morning and then worked at the workshop. We returned to the hostel at about ten o'clock and, after taking our dinner and resting ourselves for a time, we again went to attend our classes. At this time, lessons in theory were imparted after school hours. Participation in sports was compulsory. We were allowed to take rest for some time in the evening. We worked at our studies after supper. The lights were put out at eight o'clock at night. Even if one wanted to one could not read after eight o'clock. The routine-bound life of the school seemed very unpleasant. If we were late in reaching the playground, we were scolded. We had to work standing in the workshop, and learnt carpentry and blacksmithy. I could not bear this kind of teaching. By this time, I had formed an acquaintance with Oriya students who were reading in Patna College. I came to know Sri Pitambar Mishra, who later became a High Court judge, Sri Satish Mishra who became an Additional District Magistrate, Sri Ramakrishna Mohapatra, who became an advocate, and Sri Rama Chandra Tripathy, who became a lecturer, to mention a few. Pitambar babu was studying M.A. in Economics. One day, I talked about my problems to him, and told him that I was no longer interested in doing engineering and that I wanted to read for I. A. instead. I wanted to find out if arrangements could be made for doing I.A. in Patna College. He comforted me, saying, "It would not be possible for you to get admitted to Patna College. B.N. College is a private college. Its principal, D.N Sen, is a very good man. Talk to him. He may do something for you."

I went to B. N. College and said everything about myself to D.N. Sen. I told him that I was very poor and would never be able to manage without his help. When he heard that I had passed in

the first class and had got a scholarship of fifteen rupees, he said, "I'll give you free-studentship now; later, if it is possible, I will do something more for you." He immediately sent for the head clerk and instructed him to admit me to the college.

When I informed Pitambar babu of this, he felt very happy and said, "There is nothing to worry about now. You are exempted from paying college fees. Here our boarding and lodging charges come to twelve rupees per month. Out of the fifteen rupees you receive as scholarship, three rupees are left for other expenses. If you need more, you can count on my help."

The Oriya students who were doing M. A., and a few other Bengali and Bihari students lived in a lodging house called *Prabas Kutir*. But it was already full. So I decided to stay at a hostel. This hostel was situated on the bank of river Ganga. It was managed by the Education Department of the government, and Sri Saratchandra Ghoshal, lecturer, Patna College, was its superintendent. Later, he provided me with a room in the hostel meant for the inspectors of schools of Orissa. The rent was two rupees per a month. Though I stayed at the hostel, I walked down to *Prabas Kutir* at meal times every day. Another opportunity came my way after a month. A scholarship was awarded to the student of the first year class, who secured the highest percentage of marks in B.N. College. By chance, that year, I and another student called Pramath Banerjee, both had secured the first position. The scholarship was divided between the two of us. I received five rupees per month. In this way, I was exempted from paying college fees. Besides, I got a scholarship amounting to twenty rupees. So, I now faced no problems. I was released from all my worries on account of Pitambar babu's generosity.

I was the only Oriya student in B.N. College. It was compulsory for us to study an Indian language other than our

mother tongue. I chose to attend Bangla classes. Teachers and students who hailed from the Eastern region were often mocked at. I too was a victim of mockery. One day, some mischievous students wrote on the blackboard in Bangla: "Bengalis are not human beings, and Oriyas are beasts. The latter jump about and climb trees; but they have no tails." I complained about this to the principal. He said, "Keep quiet. All this will stop on its own." The principal taught us philosophy. He was a thoughtful and absent-minded man. Students called him "Bocado" at his back. I came to know from my friends that there was a special reason for giving him this strange name. One day, while teaching logic, he had repeatedly said, "Bocado cannot be reduced directly." From that day, students had named him thus. There was one history lecturer whose face was round and chubby. As his face resembled that of one of the Popes, he was nick-named 'Pope.' One day, he complained about this to the principal, who, after hearing him out, said, "How does it matter? Students may say many things behind our back; you should learn to ignore them. They call you Pope. At least, the word 'Pope' means something. But they call me 'Bocado,' which means nothing." We had two Sanskrit lecturers. One was an M. A. in Bangla and the other, a Maithili pundit. The pundit knew little English; so he explained slokas in Hindi. L. K. Ghosh was a lecturer in mathematics. He had written books on higher algebra, and solid geometry. He was a serious and thoughtful person. There were three lecturers in English. Once, one of the lecturers went on leave for a few days. A member of our mess, Satish Mitra, got appointed in his place. Rangeen Halder was a lecturer in Bangla. He was well known among Bengali lecturers. I still remember his teaching a poem by Rabindranath Tagore. He was a bachelor. He breathed his last in December 1979 at the age of eighty-four.

In 1923, a conference of the National Congress was held at Gaya. A few of us travelled to Gaya. We gave some money to a ticket collector and boarded the train. Each ticket cost about three annas. In this way, he pocketed some money. The ticket collector also traveled, sitting beside us.

We reached Gaya on a bitterly cold night. The Orissa camp consisted of around fifty to sixty huts, but we did not find anyone there. We found only Murari Tripathy sitting in one of the huts. He was warming himself by a hay fire. We also warmed ourselves. There was no question of our attending the conference of the Congress. We saw Deshabandhu Chittaranjan and other eminent leaders from a distance; but we could not get to see Subhash Bose. Next morning, we returned to Patna. We did not purchase a ticket this time. Nobody also asked us to produce the ticket. At that time, corruption was rampant among railway employees. Harihara Chhata fair is famous all over the world. It is the biggest fair in Asia. Oxen, cows, horses, camels and elephants are bought and sold here. I sailed from the *cutcherry ghat* of the Ganga and reached another *ghat* on the other side in order to see this fair. I purchased a ticket at this *ghat* and boarded a Sonapur-bound train. The train had a number of carriages and it ran along a narrow-gauge line. Two engines were attached to it. It moved so slowly that one could step into it while it was in motion. The fair was worth visiting. Hundreds of cattle, camels, horses and elephants were brought there for sale. There was even a special 'bird market,' where birds were sold. I only wandered about in the fair. Buying a ticket at four paise, I walked some distance on the bridge at Sonapur. At that time, the bridge of Sonapur was famous as the longest bridge in India. In the course of my wandering, I came across a few businessmen from Cuttack and struck up a conversation with them. They had brought walking sticks, combs and other things made of

horn for sale. I returned to my hostel at about nine o'clock at night. After I arrived back in the hostel, my Bihari friends asked me, 'What did you see at the fair?' I narrated my experiences to them. Then they asked, "Did you go to Minia market?" When I said I had not they were all very surprised. I learnt from them that Minia market was the place where prostitutes plied their trade. They lived in small tents under the bridge, where they carried on their business.

The first-year examination was over and the summer vacation began. I decided to go home. Almost all the students from Orissa started for their homes. We were about twelve in number. We could not get tickets at the station. We boarded the train anyhow, persuading the ticket collector to let us in. The ticket collector at the station gave us tickets for the next station at half their real price. A misfortune befell us. Some of us had kept our money with Pitambar babu to spend it on the way. Unfortunately, some pick-pocket thieved it. With the money left with us we managed to travel up to Kharagpur. Everyone halted there and sent me to Puri, giving me a ticket and a sum of eight *annas*. It was decided that, as soon as I reached Puri, I would request Pitambar babu's elder brother, Sri Baidyanath Mishra, the then superintendent of police, Puri to send them money. Baidyanath babu sent money to them by telegraph money order. After reaching Puri, I went to the Brahman Samiti, and there I stay with Pundit Jagannath Rath. I had planned to stay in Puri for three to four days and then go home. But after two days, an incident occurred which made me stay on in Puri for more than a month. One day, I ran into my ex-teacher, Anugraha Narayan Nayak. He made me an offer: Two American ladies wanted to study Oriya for two months. They were staying on the sea front. I could get some money teaching them only for two hours every day. I readily agreed to this proposal. He

gave me a letter of introduction and sent me to these ladies. One of the two ladies was an old woman. She said the two of them would study Oriya for an hour each, from four to six o'clock in the afternoon. The textbooks I was to teach from included *Susamachara* written by Mathew, *Oriya Grammar* written by a young sahib and a couple of elementary textbooks. No classes were to be taken on Sundays. I started teaching them from the next day. I walked from the Brahman Samiti to their residence, which stood on the beach. Since I did not have a watch, on some days I arrived at their place half an hour earlier and on some others, half an hour late. When I reached early, the old lady would leave a newspaper on the table for me. She would come with books sharp at four o'clock. When I reached late, I found her sitting with her books. During this period, I could not go to teach them on two days. The month was coming to an end and I had no money with me. I was expecting to be paid my remuneration. But the old lady did not raise the topic of payment of remuneration. One day, I felt constrained to ask for it openly. Earlier, she had asked me about how much I expected to receive by way of remuneration. I had replied that she would pay me after seeing how I taught. I was hoping that she would not pay you less than twenty rupees a month. As I asked for my fees, the old lady said, "I had decided to pay you after fifteen days. Anyway, today I'll give you your remuneration for ten days." Saying this, she brought forty rupees and said, "Take this. You will be paid again on the fifteenth." I was pleasantly surprised. I had expected to receive only fifteen or twenty rupees. The old lady asked, "Are you not satisfied with this amount?" I replied, "No, in fact, I am more than satisfied." While teaching them, I had to explain Oriya expressions through English. One day, we came across the following expression: *panchatwa prapta hele*. I told them that it meant 'he died'. But

the old lady asked me, "*Pancha* means five. How could it mean 'died'?" I told her about the five elements, which constitute our body, and explained the expression by reference to these.

Besides paying my boarding charges, I bought some new clothes with the money I received from them. But after spending a month teaching these ladies, I wanted to go home and see my parents. So, collecting my remuneration, I left for home.

The summer vacation came to an end. Again I went back to Patna to study in the second year of I. A. The new academic session started. After passing I. A. from Cuttack, Sarat Chandra Mukherjee and Annadashankar Ray had gone to do B. A. at Patna College. I was introduced to them and we became friends. Annadashankar Ray had an unquenchable thirst for knowledge. He bought many books from Kamala Book Depot and went through them. We never ever found him without a book. At the time, Narayan Mohan Dey was teaching English lecturer at Patna College. He also taught Oriya there. Another student, Karunakar Kar, went to study Sanskrit at Patna College. On the day he arrived, he became a guest at *Prabas Kutir*. While he was taking his meal, a Bengali student touched him. He stopped eating, got up, left *Prabas Kutir* and went to stay at the college hostel. This created quite a stir in the mess. Later, he became a professor of Oriya and Sanskrit at Ravenshaw College. Pramathnath Banerjee was my class teacher at B. N. College. His father was an English lecturer at Patna College. He possessed a very good knowledge of English literature. Once, a sahib published an essay titled 'Baboo English,' in a magazine. In this essay, he had shown how Indians wrote incorrect English. Lecturer Banerjee wrote an essay in response to this essay. Perhaps the title it bore was, "The Englishman's English," and this was published in *The Calcutta Review*. He argued that, as English happened to be a foreign language for Indians, it was not

easy for them to master it and write books in this language. The mistakes they commit while using a foreign language are therefore forgivable. But how many Englishmen had mastered Indian languages and had written books in these? He gave a number of instances showing how Englishmen, who took pride in their knowledge of Indian language, could go seriously wrong. Once, a sahib wanted to procure the milk of a she-ass for his baby. He gave some money to his peon to purchase a she-ass. He said to the peon in Hindi, "I want an ass." Again, on second thoughts, he said, "Bring an ass, not one like me, but one like the memsahib." Another sahib used to socialise with Indians. One day, on being invited by one of his Indian friends, he went to his residence. A few other Indian gentlemen were also present there. After some time he wanted to go to the toilet. He thought it would be an act of impoliteness to ask them where he should go to urinate; so he went upto a servant and asked him in Hindi, "Where is water passed?" The servant looked at him, nonplussed. The sahib again asked him in Hindi, "I want to make water. Tell me, where shall I make water?" The poor servant blurted out in Hindi, "You are a sahib, you can even make wind." The sahib urinated there in the courtyard itself. Shocked, the servant left the place. Lecturer Banerjee gave numerous instances like these to show that even Shakespeare, Byron and many writers like them did not write an English that was absolutely flawless. One day, I accompanied Pramath to his residence. Talking to him, I came to know that he was actually an Oriya and his surname was Tripathy. Long ago, his ancestors had left Puri district and settled in Manabhum. In time, they had become Bengalis. But the old women in his family still read the *Bhagavat* written by Jagannath Das. During the first few days of my second year in I.A., I once met a student on the bank of the Ganga. He seemed familiar to me. I stared at him.

He also gazed at me, looking confused. We came to realize after talking to each other that we were classmates in class seven (A) at Puri Zilla School. As I got double promotion and was sent up to class seven, he became junior to me by one year. His father was a munshif, who had got transferred to Bihar. He had passed matriculation examination in 1923, securing the second or third position in Bihar and Orissa province and taken admission in I.Sc in Patna College. After that we met almost every day and exchanged small talk. His name was Bhabanicharan Bhattacharya. After about twelve days, he expressed his desire to do I.A. at B.N College, because he did not like science. But taking admission in the I.A. course would have led to a shortage of attendance. So he was compelled to continue doing I.Sc. at Patna College. I had heard that he had not done well in this examination. Later, he did exceptionally well in the B.A and M.A examinations. Once one of my friends told me, "He is the same Bhabani Bhattacharya whose English novels have been translated into many languages of the world, and millions of copies of these are sold." I did not know whether what he told me was true.

I.A. Examination

The test examination was over. I began preparing for the university examination. I fell ill fifteen days before the examination was to commence. I was under the treatment of an Oriya doctor, Sri Surendra Narayan Acharya. At the time he was a lecturer in Patna Temple Medicine School. He diagnosed my fever as typhoid. I took quinnine and some other medicines. The survival of a patient depended only on a light diet and medicine. The day of the examination drew closer. My friends advised me not to sit for the examination that year. But from where would I get the money to study for another year? So I decided that I would appear for the

examination in spite of my illness. I had to seek the permission of the superintendent of the examination, the principal of Patna College, to take the examination lying in bed. I sent an application requesting for permission. It was rejected promptly. Once more, Pitambar Mishra came to my rescue. He took another application from me and met Horn sahib. This time, my application was granted. I went to the college riding an *ekka* and went to the superintendent's room upstairs with the help of two friends. There I took my examination, lying in bed. When I felt tired or my body temperature rose, I slept for a little while. I was not optimistic about the results of the examination. There was no sign of my recovering from the fever. Acharya Harihar advised Pitambar babu to send me to Puri, for he thought that a change of climate might help me recover from my illness. Sri Ramakrishna Mohapatra, who was then doing M.Sc and B.L., accompanied me to Puri and left me at Brahman Samiti. My teacher, Jagannath Rath had arranged for my treatment. Doctor Gyana Chandra Mitra treated me administering allopathic and homeopathic medicines to me for a few days. But my health showed no signs of improvement. One day, Jagannath Rath suggested that I go to Kabiraj Maguni Brahma Baidyaratna. I agreed to his proposal. Who did not know Kabiraj Maguni Brahma Baidyaratna? Baidyaratna came with two of his disciples and examined my pulse for five minutes. He expressed surprise when he learnt that I had been living on nothing but sago and barley for the last one month. He said that he would send medicine later, and advised me to take sago gruel with drumstick and brinjal soup. A student of his came with the medicine an hour later, prepared a decoction, boiling these and made me drink it. He left another dose with me with the instruction that I would take it if the fever did not subside. I took the medicine. Around evening I took the sago gruel and the drumstick soup and

slept.

In the mean time, I had written about my illness to father. That day he came in a bullock-cart and arrived where I was staying. He had thought that his son was going to breathe his last. He thought to himself, 'Why should he die at an alien place? He should die at home so that he could see the members of his family, his relatives and fellow-villagers. He would die in peace and others would also feel better.'

Around three o'clock at night we started for our village riding the bullock cart. I lay asleep, while my father was walking alongside the cart. Seated on the front, the cart-man was guiding the bullocks. Early in the morning I suddenly woke up. My clothes were wet from profuse sweating. I felt very light. There was no sign of fever. Father had a little knowledge of ayurveda. He was confident that I was now completely cured. I had suffered in vain only on account of the wrong diagnosis made by doctors.

I reached home. Though I had no fever now, I felt terribly weak. I could hardly get nutritious food to eat. I spent my days somehow, waiting for the results of the examination. I was not sure if I would be able to get through the examination. But I had no doubt that the door of higher education would be closed for me even if I did so. At times I suffered from a mild fever. However, I was out of danger.

In the mean time I received a letter from Padmacharan babu saying that he had got the news of my passing I. A. in the second class from the gazette. The results of my I.A. examination were not good as I had taken ill during the examination. Anyway, I was lucky to have passed, securing more than fifty percent of marks. The joy of my father knew no bounds. Nobody had passed I.A. in our area. Paying no heed to my protests, he immediately got me married.

I came out successful in the examination all right; but how would I support my family? In addition to his salary, my father earned something extra by dispensing ayurvedic medicines. There was another source of income, too. At the time, many Oriyas worked in factories in Calcutta. Quite a few also worked as servants and gardeners in the houses of Bengali babus. Generally speaking, they and their family members were illiterate. So, when letters came from their relatives and friends, my father read and explained these and also wrote out replies to them. He received one paisa per letter by way of remuneration. Whenever somebody's money order came, he would simply put his thumb impression on the form and took the money and my father signed as a witness. He received one or two paisa and sometimes one or two *annas* for rendering services like these. We were a family of five. The small quantity of paddy from sharecroppers and the income of my father, all taken together was but scarcely sufficient.

My First Salaried Job

I passed through almost three months of misery after I passed I. A. in 1924. At this time I received a letter from my teacher and well-wisher, Pundit Jagannath Rath. He wrote to say that Sri Gangadhar Mahapatra, the headmaster of Biswanath M. E. School in his village Biranarasinghpur would take nine months' study leave. He wanted me to serve as headmaster of the school during his absence. As soon as my father got this news, he asked me to leave for Biranarasinghpur immediately. Though I was not in good health at that time, I did what my father asked me to do. It was decided that I would walk all the way to Puri, accompanied by a labourer.

I made preparations to go to Puri. We talked about the money required for the journey. My father gave me eight *annas* and said,

'It takes two days to reach Puri. The two of you will need not more than four *annas* to meet your expenses on the way. When you reach Puri, Jagannath Rath may arrange a cart to take you to Biranarasinghpur.' I objected to this arrangement and requested him to give me at least two rupees. I said, 'I may need to buy medicines at Puri. I will not get my salary as soon as I join there. How will I manage till the end of the month?' My father gave me the same reply, 'You will not face any trouble at all. Nobody will object to giving you your salary in advance. Besides, Jagannath Rath is extremely fond of you, won't he arrange some money for you?' I never argued with my father. So, taking the eight *annas* he gave me, I set out for Biranarsinghpur, accompanied by a labourer, who carried my belongings. I reached Puri on time and sent the labourer away. Jagannath Rath received me warmly, and, the next day, we set off for Biranarasinghapur riding a carriage. I joined the school. Jagannath Rath prepared to leave for Puri. I was wondering how I would bring myself to ask him to lend me a few rupees. I felt too shy to ask for money. But he gave me five rupees on his own, saying, 'Spend this when you need to.' My problem was solved.

There were four classes in the school and four teachers in all. I was the headmaster, and Sri Nilakantha Rath was the second teacher. The name of the head pundit was Lokanath Pattajoshi, who had passed vernacular mastership. Nilakantha Rath had passed C.T. As this minor school had been set up by the King of Athagarh, Sri Biswanath Devaburma, it had been named after him. The school building was made of bricks, but it had a thatched roof. In addition to the four rooms meant for the four classes, there was another room, which doubled as the office and the library. Yet another small room lay vacant. I occupied this room.

Pattajoshi was the seniormost pundit. Everybody

acknowledged the depth of his knowledge. He wore his hair long, which was tied into a top-knot. He was addicted to many intoxicants, such as tea, *bhang*, and opium. I often went down with fever. The well-known *kabiraj* of Puri, Purnachandra Rath, treated me. But the pundit would persuade me almost every day, "Take a little opium. This will cure you of fever." By God's grace, I never took opium in my life, which was supposed to cure all diseases according to the pundit.

My younger brother, who had studied up to upper primary, was sitting idle at home. The nearest minor school was situated fifteen miles away from our village, at Nimapara. So I took him to Biranarasinghpur and admitted him to class six. My father would regularly send me letters, saying, 'Your salary is forty rupees. Keep ten rupees for your own expenses and send the remaining thirty rupees home.' In his view, a person did not need more than five rupees to support himself. He never took into account the fact that I spent some money on *paan*, or on showing hospitality to a guest or such other expenses. I could never manage to send him more than twenty rupees.

At Kakatapur Middle English School

I had to give up my temporary job after the expiry of the given period. Around this time, the Puri District Board decided that all vernacular schools would be converted into minor schools. As a result, Kakatapur Middle Vernacular School was converted to a middle English school. A committee was now set up for the management of this school. Raysahib Brahmanand Mohanty, the well-known advocate of the area, recommended that I be appointed as the headmaster of the school. One of my friends, had passed the matriculation examination. He was appointed as the second master. Sri Gopinath Dixit, the ex-head pundit of the vernacular

school, was re-appointed as the head pundit. Another trained pundit served as the second pundit. The minor school functioned in the same room where the vernacular school was run when I was a student. The police station stood in one side of the school and the post office on the other. A field lay across the road. Students of the school played on that field.

The financial condition of the second master and that of mine were not too good. But the head pundit, Gopinath Dixit was a very rich man. As a priest of goddess Mangala, he received *dakshina* from persons who had *pujas* performed by him. He had worked in some other vernacular schools before he was appointed at Kakatapur. He owned a zamindari. Paddy, green grams and such other things came from his fields. He also received saris, sheep, goats, calves etc. that people offered to the goddess. In addition to these, he earned a lot by lending out money on which he charged interest. Almost all shopkeepers were indebted to him. So he did not have to pay for his *paan*. One day, he advised me, "See, though you are getting forty rupees, you live in want. But I own a zamindari although I receive a salary of twenty-five rupees. It is not that one who earns more becomes a rich man. One who spends less becomes rich". There was no doubt that the pundit stubbornly adhered to this principle. He never spent a paise on buying vegetables. He managed with whatever he grew in his garden. If he got nothing from there he would ask somebody for drumstick leaves and make do with these. I have heard a very-interesting story about him: one day, he went to Puri. He and another person bought oil at half a paisa to rub themselves with before taking a bath in Narendra pond. When he gave a paisa to the shopkeeper, the latter returned half a paisa to him. While he was taking his bath, the coin that he had tucked in the fold of his loincloth dropped. After he came back home, he realized that he

had lost the coin. He walked half a mile back to the bathing *ghat* in the hope of finding it, but in vain. People said, 'If one even uttered his name in the morning, one would never get any food for the rest of the day.'

The second master, Somanath Sarangi, was very keen on purchasing a plot of land. My father too was keen on doing the same thing. He asked me to hand him my entire salary. I did what he said. Around this time, one acre of land near Kakatpur Middle English School was on sale. My father very much wanted to purchase this plot of land. It was bought in my wife's name. My father constructed a house on it. Needless to say, I had to arrange the money for all this.

In 1927, I applied to the training college to study L .T. The eligibility criteria for admission in this training programme demanded that the candidate must have passed I.A., but that year, of the twenty students who took admission four or five had passed M.A. and many were possessed of the B.A. degree.

At that time Upendranarayan Dutta, my ex-headmaster, was the principal of the training college. I sent a letter to his son, Bhubanamohan Dutta asking him to put in a word to his father. After a few days, I received a reply from Bhuban, "Principal Whitmore had selected the candidates before my father joined the college. So there is no possibility of your getting admitted into the training college this year."

After about a month and a half, I received a long letter signed by the principal, Upendra babu, from the training college. The gist of the letter was this: "In the event of a seat falling vacant in near future, will you be in a position to join by the specified date? You will get a stipend from the day of your taking admission. The college will not be held responsible in case you are barred from appearing at the examination on account of shortage of

attendance.” I promptly replied that I accepted the offer. The appointed day arrived. I travelled to Cuttack on foot, lashed by rains on the way. Bhuban and his brother Govinda had made all arrangements for putting up me at the residence of their father. I met Upendra babu in the evening. We discussed many things, but he said nothing at all about my admission. For my part, I also did not ask him about it. I thought that it was very kind of Upendra babu to get me admitted to the college. Next day, after I finished my breakfast, Upendra babu asked, “How long are you going to stay here?” I was shocked. What sort of a question was this? I said, “Receiving your letter, I have come with the hope of getting admitted to the college.” He said, “Yes, I remember having written that letter. But it said, ‘In the event of a seat falling vacant’. One student, who had suffered from liver abscess, underwent on operation. Since he took time to recover, I sent you that letter. Yesterday, I received information that he would get well in about a week’s time. Now, tell me, will it be fair to strike off his name and admit you?” I said, “No, that will be unfair to him. I can get a seat next year through your good offices.” Later, I came to know that the student was Sri Ramachandra Mahapatra, who did M.A., and *Kavyatirtha*.

I went back home after one day. Next year, we learnt that the L.T. course would be discontinued and the D.Ed course would be introduced in its place, and only candidates having B.A. degrees would be allowed to take admission in this course. So I decided to appear for the B.A. examination.

Appearing for the B. A. Examination

I sat for the B.A examination in 1928, that is, four years after I had passed I.A. It was not an annual examination, but a supplementary one. Those days, according to the rules, only those

who had served in the education department for at least three consecutive years after passing I.A., were allowed to appear for B.A. examination privately. I had not joined Kakatapur M.E School immediately after leaving Biswanath M.E. School. I had not done three years of teaching by the time the B.A examination was held in 1927. I could have appeared for the annual examination in 1928, but I would have had to take leave to prepare for the examination. There was no hope of availing myself of leave for such a long duration. So I decided to sit for the supplementary examination, which was scheduled to be held during the summer vacation.

I could not decide on my subjects of study for the B.A. examination. I brought a copy of the courses of study from the university. One or two of my friends suggested that I take economics. I got two books on the subject and started going through them. But when I saw the long list of prescribed textbooks for economics, I felt very nervous. How would I be able to collect so many books in a village, of all places? But, for Sanskrit, fewer textbooks were prescribed and I could find old second-hand books without difficulty. Then I learnt that, for philosophy also, fewer textbooks were prescribed. I stumbled upon a philosophy book, of which I could make sense without much difficulty. The time to submit the application for taking the B. A. examination came. I decided to take philosophy and Sanskrit as optional subjects. English and Oriya were compulsory subjects.

One of my friends gave me his notebook to read and copy from. This helped me prepare myself for two papers. The third paper was Ethics and the prescribed textbook was a big one. It was written by a European. The examination was about three months away. I got hold of this book, but I found it too difficult. I grew quite desperate. All the same, I took the examination. I went to Ravenshaw college hostel. There I heard that there were only

five philosophy examinees. I asked one examinee about the Ethics paper. I told him the name of the book which I was going through, and the difficulty I was facing in trying to make sense of it. He said, "Nobody reads that book in the college. Read the book written by P.B. Chatterjee. All of us depend on this book". I got the book from him and found that the subject had been explained very lucidly in it. Had I read it through, it would have helped me a lot. But he expressed his unwillingness to lend me the book. I pleaded with him to let me keep it for some time. At last he relented and let me have the book for the next two nights. I put in my best efforts during those two nights and made notes from it. I could now entertain hopes of passing the examination.

Around this time I asked a clairvoyant if I would pass the B.A examination. He said 'You won't pass this time. But, next year, you will surely come out successful.' Philosophy scared me from the very beginning. I had some hope of doing well in the other two papers; but I was not confident of doing well in the Ethics paper. I wanted to drop the examination. One of my friends said, "You may fail, but there is no harm in sitting for the examination. At least you would be able to get to know the pattern of questions. This will enable you to prepare well for the next year. There is no reason why you should not appear at the examination. You will lose one year, that's all." I changed my mind and appeared at the examination. I went through the notes, which I had jotted down remaining awake for two nights. I could manage to answer half of the questions in the Ethics paper. I had no doubt that I would fail. But after sitting for the examination, I began to entertain hopes of coming out successful. It was June, 1928. While our examination was going on, Ratnakar Pati once came as the invigilator. The next day he did not turn up. We heard that he had gone off to Satyabadi, as Pundit Gopabandhu Das had

fallen seriously ill. Then the news came that 'Utkalamani', the jewel of Orissa, Pundit Gopabandhu Das had left for his heavenly abode, drowning us in an ocean of grief.

Gopabandhu in Kakatapur

Kakatapur is a flood-prone area. Almost every year, the floods in rivers Devis, Prachi, Kusabhadra destroyed crops. Many a time, Gopabandhu came to tour this region. He travelled to remote villages to help the villagers. A spinning centre had been set up in Kakatapur. A few Congress workers lived there.

As I was a student at Puri Zilla School, I knew Gopabandhu. But I never imagined that he would remember me. I never knew why, instead of calling me by my name, he chose to call me Babaji. Whenever he went to Kakatapur, he stayed at the hostel of a minor school. He would eat rice, dal and curry made of spinach and brinjal with us. Sri Artatrana Das, who hailed from Patitane near Kakatapur, was a primary school teacher. He always wore coarse clothes and was a member of the Congress. He usually lived with Gopabandhu. Artatrana Das wielded immense power in that region. He was an adept at village politics and he had hundreds of people as his followers. By virtue of his leadership qualities, he had become the secretary of the minor school. One morning, Gopabandhu plucked leaves from a big kantamarisha tree that grew near the well. We also joined him. Gopabandhu said, "Nobody ate these leaves in Hajaribagh jail. We collected and ate these." That day, we ate fried kantamarisha leaves mixed with shredded coconut. The police station lay close to the boundary wall of the school. Narayanchandra Das, the sub-inspector of the police station, asked me why Gopabandhu babu had come to this place, how many days he would spend here, what places he would visit and so on. I told Gopabandhu of this. Gopabandhu said, "Tell

him, he could get the correct information from me. I am not doing anything in secret that I would hide information from him." At the time, eating bread made of wheat flour was not common. Everybody took two meals of rice a day. Gopabandhu babu would go on a tour in the morning. He would take some pieces of bread, which would be prepared the night before, to eat on the way. After finishing his morning ablutions, he would get ready to visit some villages. One day, Gopabandhu was taking rest in a village. The pieces of bread were kept in a palm- leaf bundle near his bag. Some children sat surrounding him. Noticing that they were eyeing the palm-leaf bundle, Gopabandhu babu opened it and gave the bread to the children. Then he rose to go. I said, "You gave all the bread to the children. By the time you return, it would be afternoon. You will feel very hungry." He said, "You have no faith in god." He then recited a *sloka* on God's mercy. That day, Gopabandhu babu returned in the evening. He said, "I had never had such good food in all my life." One brahmin gentleman, who was an ex-police official, had invited him to his house and given him a sumptuous meal. On another occasion, during the council election, he went to a meeting to canvass for Pandit Lingaraj. At this meeting, he said, "Lingaraj babu has received an M.A. degree, the highest degree from the university. He was getting hundreds of rupees as salary from his government job. He left this job to serve the country and embraced a life of poverty. He has been nominated to contest for a seat in the Bihar-Orissa Governors' Council. If you vote for him, it will help him make both ends meet.' On our way back to him, I said, "Today you presented Lingaraj babu as a very poor, pitiable person. It would give one the impression that Lingaraj babu is unable to support himself without a salaried job."

Gopabandhu said, "No, I have done the right thing by saying what I did. The people, who were present at the meeting, were

illiterate and poor. They do not understand what politics is; they understand what it meant to fill their stomachs. I was not speaking to educated people like you. These people will get the point. They will vote for Lingaraj babu." In fact, Lingaraj babu won the election.

Gopabandhu could make others laugh without laughing, and he could make people cry remaining absolutely calm and collected.

After my examination was over, I purchased two photographs relating to the last day in his life. One of these featured Pundit Nilakantha, Acharya Harihara, lecturer Ratnakar Pati and others present by his deathbed. The other photo showed the funeral procession.

Some days passed after my B.A. examination. I once came to Puri on some work. Around twelve in the noon, I heard that the B.A. results were out. These were published in *The Search Light*, a magazine which was published from Patna. It was not possible to get this magazine anywhere except Raghunandan library. I waited till 4 P.M, feeling hungry and tired. The library opened, the magazine was also available. My hands trembled and my heart raced. Had I passed or failed?

Anyway, I found that I and my friend Dayanidhi Mishra had passed. Daya was a student of Satyabadi school. He was an ideal student. During 1922-23, he left his studies and worked for the Congress receiving an allowance of about ten rupees. Later, he resumed his studies and became a contractor.

On passing the B.A. examination, I felt very happy and proud of myself. I never believed in so-called astrologers, who made money by foretelling the future. I looked upon them as hypocrites. But now I find, even those who become the leaders of the country, regularly consult astrologers. Even Prime Minister Indira Gandhi consulted them. The last emperor of Russia, Czar Nicholas relied

on the advice of a holy man called Rasputin. So, it should not surprise us at all that the so-called sadhus guide our prime ministers or rulers and holy men like Dhirendranath Brahmachari. However, certain incidents convinced me that some people do possess strange powers. After I passed B.A., I no longer wanted to work in a minor school. I wanted to be a high school teacher. As a result, my relationship with my colleagues grew sour. I left that school.

Teaching at a High School

A new high school had been set up at Olasingh under the patronage of the local zamindar, Dasarathi Pattanaik. I was appointed as an assistant teacher at a salary of ninety rupees a month.

The headmaster of this school was Sri Jagamohan Pattanaik. Sri Bichhandacharan Pattanaik, who had a B.A. (Hons) degree, was the assistant headmaster. Earlier, the school was a minor school and later, it got converted to a high school through Jagamohan babu's exertions. He had passed I.A. He was preparing himself for taking the B.A. examination. Bichhanda babu was my friend. However, he resented Jagamohan babu and he therefore tried to bias me against him. When Jagamohan babu failed his B.A. examination, Bichhanda babu hatched a conspiracy against him so that he could himself become the headmaster. Even the students got divided into two hostile camps. Bichhand babu got the inspector to pass orders to the effect that he should be appointed the headmaster in place of Jagamohan babu. Tension mounted. I acted on the principle: "He who escapes survives." I sent an application to the training college with the recommendation of the secretary and founder, Dasarathi Pattnaik, for admission in the D.Ed course. I kept myself aloof from the Jagamohan-Bichhanda affair by taking admission in the training college.

Taking leave for nine months, I enrolled myself at Cuttack Training College.

At Cuttack Training College

While teaching at Kakatapur M.E. School, I had earlier appeared at the half-yearly teacher's certificate examination. This examination was considered equivalent to the training examination. I had appeared for that examination in 1927. I was one of the two examinees who had taken this examination. The other examinee was Sri Raghunath Mohapatra, who was teaching at P.M. Academy. A sahib, who was an inspector of schools, interviewed us asking questions on subjects such as teaching methods, child psychology. He asked us to appear for the examination again without conducting a practical examination. We sat for the examination for the second time. We both passed and received certificates.

In July 1929, I went to Cuttack to study at the training college. The building where Cuttack Training College (now known as Radhanath Training College) functioned was situated near Ravenshaw Collegiate School. It was a two-storied building. The college was run in the ground floor and the room upstairs was used as the residence of the headmaster of the Collegiate School. At present, all these houses have been re-developed, and the sub-judge court and other offices are being run there. A few rooms of the ground floor of the training school hostel were set apart for the use of students of the training college. I was given a room in this hostel.

Besides the principal, there was only one lecturer in the college. His name was Mahesh Prasad Sarkar. The two taught almost all the subjects. Sri Bhima Rout, the headmaster of the training school, taught us mathematics for a few days. We got

first-aid training from a doctor from the medical school, and a drawing teacher of the Collegiate school gave us some lessons in handwriting and drawing. There were two clerks in the college.

There were twenty students in the college. Four or five of these had M.A. degrees. Some of the students were the employees of the educational department. They worked as high-school teachers or school inspectors. The government had sent them to undergo training, but while undergoing training, they received their salary. As they were selected from Bihar and Orissa province, some of them were Biharis and Bengalis. Generally, Oriya students formed the majority. I remember a Bengali student, Jatin, who had come from Ranchi Zilla School, and Rashabehari Ray and Govinda Mishra, who hailed from Bihar. Of the Oriya students, I remember Sri Lokanath Mohapatra, Kanhucharan Das, Sidheswar Das, Madhusudan Mishra, one muslim student, who was known as Khan sahib, Bholanath Sahu, Radhacharan Sahu, Gopinath Mohapatra and Hari Malik.

Cerebral malaria claimed the life of Hari Malik a few days after he was admitted to this college. Since he belonged to a low caste, he was not staying at the hostel. He was staying with an ex-student of Satyabadi School, Chandra Shekar Mishra (owner of Ambika Press). The government of Kalahandi state sent Loknath Mohapatra, who had passed M.A. in Oriya from Calcutta University. Khan and Madhusudan Mishra, who was called Madhu Mishra, were school sub-inspectors and had been deputed by the government. The monthly scholarship of thirty rupees sufficed for most of the students. And, if one cut down on one's expenses a little, it was even possible to save up to five rupees.

Mahesh Prasad Sarkar was a slim and hard-working man. While teaching at Ranchi Zilla School, he had saved some money from his salary, and gone to England and obtained an M.Ed degree

from Edinburgh. After he returned to India, he was appointed as a lecturer. He was very courteous towards the students. The Principal, F.B. Whitmore was a resident of London, but people wondered if he had a house of his own there, for he had given the address of a hotel as his mailing address when he left Orissa. Whitmore sahib was a *pucca* Englishman. At the slightest opportunity, he attacked our national pride. It was as if he could not digest his food if he did not say something nasty about India. He resented the fact that Faucus sahib was senior to him and received a higher salary.

Participation in sports was obligatory after college hours. We played tennis, badminton and other games. Whitmore sahib took part in these sports every day. Later, when Mrs. Whitmore came, she too took part in sports.

I shall give here an example of how the sahib expressed his feelings of hostility to Indians. One day, I came early to the playground. The tennis court lay very close to the college. Perhaps the sahib came downstairs on seeing me. Nobody else had arrived. The sahib said, "Sridhar, don't you think it is foolish of Jatin Das to continue his fast in jail." At the time a patriot called Jatin Das had gone on a fast in jail. Day by day his condition kept deteriorating. I retorted, "If Jatin Das was a fool, Macsweeny was even a greater fool." My words seemed so harsh to him that his face flushed. He turned away and went back home. Macsweeny had laid down his life after going on a fast for two months in protest against British rule in Ireland. So the sahib found my remark difficult to digest.

As far as I know, the family life of Whitmore sahib was not a happy one. When I was studying in Patna in 1923-24, he was the principal of New College. The residence of another sahib called Caldwell adjoined his residence. Unpleasant situations were often

created between these two sahibs because of Mrs. Whitmore.

At the time of our joining the college in July 1929, Whitmore sahib was living alone. He repeatedly wanted to make us feel that we were a race of petty people and the sahibs belonged to a higher race. One day, showing us one of our textbooks, he said, "See, the writer of this book is an elementary school teacher. Here the graduate teachers of high schools read this book." One of us said, "Sir, that primary-school teacher may be getting twelve hundred rupees per month, and, by your grace, after passing D.Ed, we, who hold B.A. and M.A. degrees, will receive not more than sixty-five rupees per month." This silenced the sahib. In fact, after leaving Cuttack, Whitmore sahib made a living as a primary school teacher in England.

Before the commencement of Christmas holidays, Whitmore sahib went on furlough and left for England. A meeting was arranged to bid farewell to Mrs. and Mr. Whitmore. In their lectures, students lavished praise on the sahib. The sahib spoke about the happy days he had spent in Cuttack. He informed us that Henderson sahib, who would replace him, was familiar with Orissa. He said that we would enjoy his puckish humour. He wished us well.

Anyway, Whitmore sahib left Orissa. Many students wanted to get a letter of appreciation from him, and approached him for the same. But he was in an impatient and angry mood, which was quite unlike him. We came to know from the sahib's personal attendant that the memsahib had bought on credit some articles from a businessman in Cuttack. Whitmore sahib had driven the person, whom the shopkeeper had sent to collect the money away. When he heard that the sahib was leaving for England, this shopkeeper applied for the cancellation of his passport.

Whitmore left and Henderson sahib came. Henderson

belonged to Scotland, and had studied at Glasgow University. He was a very learned man. He was on very good terms with Indians, especially with Oriyas. He was the headmaster of Collegiate School for some time. He had opposed the appointment of Raysahib Nanda Kishore Bal as assistant inspector and had blocked his promotion. He could write and read Oriya very well. He had written a book titled *Oriya Translation and Retranslation*. A teacher of Collegiate School had helped him with writing this work. He regularly read the Oriya newspaper, the *Samaj*. He could even sing Oriya songs.

His nature was exactly the opposite of that of Whitmore sahib. He was great fun to be with. The English pronunciation of Whitmore was clear and easy to follow, but it took us a few days to get used to the Henderson sahib's pronunciation. Whitmore was of the view that we did not know the correct pronunciation of English words. He must have spent four to six hours in our class to teach us the pronunciation of such easy words like "Is," "Sugar", "Heard," "Bird". He taught us how to pronounce 'London,' but our Indian vocal chords could not produce the right sounds. We found Henderson sahib's accent strange. We never imagined that English was spoken with such different accents in England and Scotland. He pronounced 'T' as 'ta' and 'D' as 'da'. Like Whitmore, he came down to play tennis with us. If the ball went beyond the boundary, he said, "bandri, bandri," which meant 'boundary'. One day he asked me, "Have you *buts*?" It took me a long time to find out what he really meant by '*buts*'. I thought he said, 'boats, or boots.' At last, he asked me, "Have you municipality *buts*?" At long last, I realised that he was saying 'votes.'

His teaching revealed the depth of his knowledge. While teaching he would get carried away by the subject he taught and become totally oblivious of the passage of time. Very often he did

not leave the class even after the period was over. Every morning he would come to the hostel and spend time with the boarders. A few days before our final examination was held, one evening he called me from under a tree. We both sat down on a raised brick platform. He asked me about my family and said, "Will you go to Patna to read for M.Ed? I shall give you ten rupees every month. As you will get a stipend of forty rupees, you will easily be able send twenty-five rupees home." Such sympathy as this from a foreigner is truly rare.

One day, while teaching us 'spelling', Henderson said, "The spelling of a word cannot be learnt by getting it by heart. It can only be learnt by writing. It is not the work of our eyes but of our hand. So our hand should be properly trained in order to learn to write the correct spelling of a word." Then he solicited our opinion on this matter. We all agreed with him.

He asked us to give him an example. We gave the example of one of our classmates, who always wrote 'tought'. He knew the correct spelling, 'taught', but he wrote 'tought' in spite of himself and he could never get rid of this habit.

By the time our course came to an end, his mind showed signs of giving way. He committed suicide three or four months after we passed. In his suicide note, he wrote, "I committed suicide on account of departmental and domestic worries." The news left me numb. I knew that his family lived in England. He was extremely fond of his son and often talked to me about him. Some said that his wife had filed for a divorce in England, and this was the reason why he ended his life. There was no way anyone could know the truth.

Our final examination drew closer. Around this time the non-co-operation movement gained momentum. A large number of Congress leaders were arrested and thrown into prison. I sat for

my written examination. In one paper, while writing about the education policy of India, I wrote that the British government was malicious. Then I realised that, in all likelihood, a British academic would evaluate my answer script. So I added, "This is how the British government is unjustly criticized". I crossed the word out, but what I had written was legible. I did not fail in that paper, and later, I heard that Henderson sahib had evaluated this paper.

Only one of us failed to pass the teacher's training examination. I always felt that he was failed on account of political reasons. His name was Madhusudan Mishra, and he was called Madhu Mishra. Though he hailed from a village, where brahmins enjoyed revenue-free land, near Puri, he was not an orthodox brahmin. He was very brilliant and independent-minded. After serving as a school sub-inspector for several years, he came to undergo teachers' training. Like him, another sub-inspector, who was called Khan Sahib, also underwent training with us. Both were around fifty years old. As both of them received more than a hundred rupees as their salary, they stayed with their families outside the hostel. Madhu Mishra was my teacher at Puri Zilla School for a few months. So I always gave him my notes to read and helped him prepare notes on different lessons.

A practical examination, where we had to demonstrate our teaching skills, followed the written test. We had to submit two copies of our lesson plans on three subjects a week before the day of examination. It was the principals' responsibility to decide the date and time of the examination. One afternoon, the principal came to the hostel and said, "Get ready for your demonstration classes, which will be held next morning. You may submit one copy of the lesson plan at the time of the examination." When we asked why we were asked to submit one copy of the lesson plans instead of two, he said, "There is so much turmoil. If the

examination cannot be held now, it would not be possible to conduct it for quite some time, and the declaration of the results will be delayed." We presumed that under such circumstances nobody would be failed.

On the first day, Madhu Mishra and I appeared for the practical examination along with a few others. I was having a headache that day. I somehow managed to take my demonstration class and came out of the room. Madhu Mishra went in to teach after me. The external examiner, Mr. Biggs, who was the principal of the European School, was present along with Henderson sahib. Madhu Mishra chose to teach the topic, "Peasants Revolt" in class nine and submitted his lesson plan. He asked certain introductory questions to the students to give them a general idea about the topic. At the time, the carriage-men had gone on strike in Calcutta. Mishra had decided to begin by mentioning that strike and then to go on to talk about the peasants' uprising in England. After asking a few questions, he said, "When all other ways of protesting against injustice are blocked, people get united and rise in revolt. In the past, peasants in Europe had revolted for this reason. Today, we will read about this revolt."

Both the examiners came out onto the veranda and discussed in a low voice. Biggs sahib went back to the classroom. Henderson sahib came to me and said, "Well, Sridhar, don't you think he is giving mischievous political ideas to students?" It became clear to me at once that misfortune would befall Madhu Mishra. Biggs sahib presented a suitcase to my friend, Jatin and a fountain pen to me in appreciation of our good performance in the practical examination.

As soon as the examination was over, I went back to Olasingh High School and reported back for duty as assistant headmaster. I was planning to go to Cuttack to meet Henderson sahib after a

few days. But I got the news that he had committed suicide. Later, Sri Radhashyam Das told me that on the morning of the day Henderson sahib committed suicide, he asked the boy who was fanning him to go out of his bedroom and shut the door behind him. A little later, smoke rose from the room and with it came the smell of kerosene. Some teachers and students who were around started shouting. They found the door locked from the inside. Radhashyam babu was passing by. He rushed to the spot and forced the door. It was found that the sahib had set himself on fire. He was immediately rushed to a doctor. But he breathed his last within half an hour.

Job in a Feudatory State

I reported at Olasingh Dasarathi High School. The atmosphere there continued to be dense with tension. I went on doing my duty but I felt tense and unhappy. I came across an advertisement for a trained graduate headmaster for King Edward VII School at Boud. The salary offered was about 120 rupees. Free lodging would be provided. Around this time, government services usually carried a salary of 75 to 125 rupees. As for me, I was getting a salary of seventy rupees; so I applied for this post.

I had no idea about what life was like in a feudatory state. My impressions about feudatory states and the kings who ruled these were formed by Fakir Mohan Senapati's autobiography. I always believed that kings of feudatory states were strange creatures. They were not educated, and guided by sycophants, they often acted on whims. They usually oppressed their subjects. One had to address them saying 'Your Majesty,' 'Your Highness,' 'Raja sahib.' One had to speak to them using flowery language to convey even the most banal pieces of information.

A few days later, I received a telegram, which read, "Can you

join by such and such date?" While I was wondering what to say in reply, I ran into Puri Zilla school inspector, Lokanath Pattnaik. He was himself the native of a feudatory state called Bamra. He had worked as an inspector in the education department in feudatory states for a long time. I told him everything and sought his advice. He said, "What you have heard about kings is not true; serving in a feudatory state is almost as good as serving under the British government. You may get a pension and provident fund facilities. Go there without having second thoughts." So I immediately sent a telegram to the king giving my consent. I received an appointment letter. I came to know that I would have to travel by train to Meramandali in order to go to Boud garh. From there, I could travel by bus to Rairakhole. Then, reaching Kiakata riding a bullock cart, I would sail across river Mahanadi to reach Boud garh. Only in the summer months did buses ply from Rairakhole to Kiakata. I wrote a letter to the dewan asking him to tell me how to reach Boud garh. He sent a telegram, saying, "Come to Cuttack and buy a ticket to Meramandali from there."

I met Dr. Satyabadi Mishra in the train. He was on his way to Dhenkanal. When he heard that I was going to Boud, he said, "Until yesterday bus services to Kiakata had not started. You would surely face a lot of trouble." I requested him to send a telegram to Boud in my name, stating the inconvenience and requesting arrangements of providing me with conveyance from Rairakhole."

At night, I arrived at Meramandali station. From there, I went to Rairakhole via Angul by bus. I kept my luggage in a small *dharmasala*, rolled out a mat and sat down on it. I got my first taste of life in a feudatory state here at Rairakhole. Of course, earlier I had travelled through a few feudatory states by train and bus.

The day dawned; I took breakfast and rested myself. In the

afternoon, I set out to take a stroll through the town. While walking along the road, I saw a horse-drawn carriage. A lean and thin person sat in it. He had put on a *dhoti* and a *punjabi*. A murmur spread among the people who were standing by the side of the road. Many prostrated themselves before this person. I realized that he was none other than the king of Rairakhole.

It was a small state. Poverty was writ large on the palace, the *cutcherry* and everywhere else. While I was returning to the *dharmasala*, an elderly woman guessed that I was a stranger and wanted to find out who I was. I introduced myself and told her what had brought me there. She said that I might find staying at the *dharmasala* inconvenient, and advised me to spend the night at the girls' school instead and to leave for Kiakata the next morning. I left her saying that I would go to the girls' school if no alternative arrangements could be made. I came across another school. It was an upper primary school. Perhaps it was the highest educational institution in that state. I spoke to the headmaster of the school. When he heard everything, he said, "Fie, fie, why will you stay in the girls' school? The woman who gave you this advice is a Christian." I had already guessed that she was a Christian. The head pundit of the upper primary school not only made arrangements for putting me up for the night, he also arranged a bullock-cart, which would take me Kiakata. I gave two rupees by way of an advance to the cart-man, which was half the fare. The night passed comfortably.

Around eight in the morning, I travelled with my luggage to Kiakata riding the bullock-cart. The road was flanked by rows of huge sal trees. I was told that tigers prowled the area. After we had covered a distance of about five miles and approached a village called Kadaligarh, a car drove past us. On the rear of the car was written, "Boud State." I guessed that the car would go to Rairakhole

and return without finding me. But the car came back about ten minutes later. There was no one in it except the driver. He found out who I was, seated me in the car and drove me down to Kiakata. From there I crossed river Mahanadi by a boat, reached Boudgarh and stayed at the school hostel. Next morning, I went to meet the dewan. He was the highest official of the state. While I was climbing the veranda, somebody shouted asking me to take off my shoes. I was surprised and looked around. The dewan sahib, Raghabananda Pattanaik, came out, took my hand and led me into a room and made me sit on another chair beside him. A few people, who were present there, gazed at me, astonishment writ large on their face. Who was this person? How could he sit on a chair placed beside that of the dewan sahib, without taking off his shoes?

Raghabananda babu asked me if I had faced any inconvenience on the way, how I had spent the night at Rairakhole and so on. He regretted that the car reached so late and expressed his annoyance with the driver. I gave him my joining report. He advised me that I should meet the King the same day.

Meeting the King

Around ten in the morning, I went to pay my respects to the king. Entering the palace premises, I learnt from a constable that the king was waiting for the boat on the bank of the river. I made my way to the riverbank. Many people were standing there. Two of them had put on colourful and shining robes. I was sure that none of these two was the king. I found myself in an awkward situation. I had never seen even the photograph of the king. I only knew that his name was Narayan Prasad Dev. Now, how would I recognize him among so many people?

I waited a little and quickly glanced over the faces of the people. One gentleman in a white *pyjama* and a *punjabi* stretched

his hand towards another person, who was holding a cigarette-case. The case seemed to be made of gold. So, I assumed the person in *pyjama* and *punjabi* to be the king, and advanced towards him. I bowed to him and he accepted my salute, raising one hand and immediately asked me when I had reached Boud, whether I had given the joining report and exchanged pleasantries. I gave replies to all his queries calmly. The boat was ready. Before the Raja sahib got into the boat, he turned to me and said, "I will return to the garh after three days. Meet me then."

Some Other Incidents

I would like to narrate a few incidents, which had taken place earlier, before I go on to narrate my experiences as an employee in a feudatory state.

In my childhood, I lived in abject poverty. I had to go without food for days on end. Words cannot describe these experiences. Nobody except one who has gone through these can really understand them. It may be said that people observe fasting on the day of *ekadashi* and other festivals. Employees, workers, leaders fast, even unto death, to get their demands accepted. After all, Mahatma Gandhi had fasted continuously for three days, seven days, even twenty-one days on a number of occasions. Does any one die fasting for a day? But the agony of remaining hungry because one has no food is an entirely different experience. Nobody waits for you with a glass of orange juice when you break your fast; or nobody feeds you cakes and *rasagollas* in stealth. But we never felt envious of anyone. At that time, we were strangers to the central ideas of the French Revolution: liberty, equality and fraternity. We had no idea that the British government had made us poor, exploiting our country. We did not know that the government machinery was responsible for our sorrows and the

social disparity dividing us. Nobody had told us about such things. After the non-co- operation movement, we came to realize that fate had not decreed this miserable predicament for us; it was our government, our social system which were responsible for it. Fear had been instilled into my mind during my childhood.

When the vaccination party came, mother hid me in the kitchen and sent them away paying them a bribe amounting to an anna or two. Children were hidden away whenever a constable came in sight. There was a special reason why muslims scared me. Those days, Hindus wore their hair long whereas muslims had moustaches and beards. So, one could easily recognise them. Their features and the Oriya mixed with Urdu which they spoke frightened us. One day, I saw two muslims carrying a calf on their shoulders. Perhaps it was unable to walk on account of some disease. They slaughtered it near a screwpine bush and carried away its meat and skin. A child showed me what went on there. My fear of muslims increased a hundredfold. But I knew there were many muslims among my father's friends. I have received help and sympathy from many muslims. Those days, muslims were considered untouchable like *bauris*, *hadis* and *panas*.

While studying at Puri Zilla School, I received many important books written by eminent Oriya and English author as prizes. I read a lot of Oriya books, which included *Collected Works of Radhanath Ray*, *Collected Works of Madhusudan Rao*; and *Pranaya Ballari*, *Tapaswini*, *Utkal Laxmi* written by Gangadhar. I also read *Vikramaditya* written by Chintamani Mohanty and several other books. It should be remembered that the number of Oriya books published at that time was very small. I read and reread many English books like Lamb's *Tales from Shakespeare*, *Our village*; and *Folk Tales of Bengal* by Lal Behari Day. The library of Puri Zilla School was very famous. I borrowed books

from there and read them. I was particularly fond of Burke's *Speeches on the Impeachment of Warren Hastings*, Haggard's *She*, *Confessions of a Thug*, Todd's *Rajasthan: Tales of Indian Chivalry*, Smiles' *Character*, to mention a few. I found the books written by Smiles very instructive. Later, my friend Chandrashekhar Mishra (an ex-student of Satyabadi School and the owner of Ambika press) wrote a valuable book called *Students' Companion*, which was modelled on Smiles' books.

In 1919, the All Utkal Students' Conference was held at Puri along with the Utkal Conference. Sri Chandrashekhar Behera and Madhu babu were the presidents of Utkal Conference and Students' Conference respectively. Madhu babu did not write down his lecture before delivering it. His lecture, which he delivered in English, was later published in *The Oriya*. I remember that Sri Jadumani Mangaraj had stood first in the English debate competition, which had been organised during the Students' Conference. Around this time, the play *Purusottam Dev* written by Godavarisha babu, was staged at Ramachandi Club. Boys played female roles. That girls would act on the stage was simply unthinkable. An adaptation of Fakir Mohan's short story, 'Patent Medicine' was also staged. It was my first experience of watching a play. Of course, I had watched *yatras* in our village earlier.

In 1921, Madhu babu was appointed as a minister of the Bihar and Orissa province. Before he left for Patna, I and another student went to him with an application from our headmaster asking for donation for the poor students' fund of the school. It was about evening. He was discussing something with a few gentlemen in a room. The two of us stood at the door, waiting. After some time, his eyes fell on us. So we held out the subscription book to him. Looking at it, he burst out angrily, "You praise Mahatma Gandhi, don't you?" As soon as he returned the book to us, we scurried

out of his room.

Around this time, a literary meet was organized at Puri Zilla School. A few essays on the life of Radhanath Ray were read out here. Munshif Lakshminarayan Pattanaik presided over the meeting. He had a passion for knowledge and was a great lover of literature. Later, he set up a literary association and published a number of excellent books. Many policemen in civil dress were present in the audience. I read out an essay and was awarded five rupees. Some disturbances occurred towards the end of the meeting. Someone shouted: "Victory to Mahatma Gandhi, *Bande mataram*." It became impossible to continue the meeting. Annoyed, Lakshminarayan babu said, "You are shouting five to ten times '*Vande mataram*', 'Victory to Mahatma Gandhi'. I am ready to say it hundred times. But, will the country get liberated if you go on shouting like this?"

In 1918, when I was a student of class eight, I had been to the school managed by Lakshminarayan Sahu, who was a member of the Servants of India Society. He often asked me to translate news on famine published in Oriya newspapers into English. He edited and typed these out and sent them to magazines like the *Hitabad* and *The Search Light*. He gave these to me to store in a room made of palm-leaves in the field adjacent to the hostel of Zilla School. His magazine, the *Sahakar* was launched around this time. A news relating to a co-operative society, which I had translated into Oriya, was published on the first page of its first issue. It was printed at Jagannath press in Puri. Lakshminarayan babu and I brought copies of the magazine from the press, folded these all through the night and pasted addresses on them. Sarangadhar Das was studying in California at the time. As we did not know how much we should spend on the postage stamps if the letter was sent to the USA, we pasted stamps worth four *annas* on the copy

of the magazine we sent to him. Later, Sarangadhar Das sent us a few essays on production of sugar in English. I translated these into Oriya, which were published in the *Sahakar*.

Thakkar Bapa

In 1918-19, a famine struck Orissa. Instructed by Mahatma Gandhi, Thakkar Bapa came to distribute relief in Puri district. A famine office was set up at the residence of Jagabandhu Singh, advocate. Lakshminarayan Sahu worked with him. One day, I went to Jagabandhu babu's residence to meet Lakshminarayan babu there. There was no one around except someone, who looked like a tourist from the western part of the country, was washing clothes with a cake of soap near the well. I asked him in broken Hindi, "Is Lakshminarayan Sahu present here?" He said in English, smiling, "Lakshminarayan Sahoo has gone to rural areas." Something about his face and the manner of his talking gave me the impression that he did not belong to the western part of the country. I guessed that he was a great leader. Plucking up courage, I asked him, "May I know your name, please?" He said, "I am Thakkar."

Amritlal Vitthal Das Thakkar worked in Orissa for several years. While bidding farewell to him, one pundit said, "His name suits him well: one who takes care of others all his life is Amritlal."

Kavya Pratham Examination

While I was a student of class eight or nine, I once took Kavya Prathama examination held under the auspices of the Sanskrit Association. One of the papers consisted of excerpts from *Hitopadesha*, and another paper comprised questions relating to figures of speech. *Srutobodha* was the textbook on stress and another book, *Chandraloka*, was the textbook on figures of speech. I got by heart twenty *slokas* only from *Srutabodha*. I secured

hundred out of hundred in the arithmetic paper and fifty marks in the literature paper, but I failed on account of my miserable performance in the paper just mentioned. This was the first and the last time I ever failed in any examination in my life.

Scout Officers' Training

During 1927 and 1928, scout officers' training was imparted to teachers for spreading the scout movement. Rallies and jamborees were organised in different parts of the world. I joined one such training programme in Puri. The duration of the programme was about twelve days.

We were given training in a building on the beach in Puri. A.S. Virley imparted training to us. During these days, we had to work very hard. We could not take any rest even at night. Some of us had to guard the camp at night, taking turns. It was mandatory to do everything including cooking by ourselves. On the first day of the training programme, one trainee's hands got scalded by hot rice water when the earthen pot in which he was cooking broke. He could not take part in the training programme and only watched others working. After the programme came to an end, he, too, received a certificate. At the time, Sri Mahesh Chandra Pradhan was a teacher at Puri Zilla School. He had also joined this training camp. Later, he became the Director of Public Instruction, Orissa.

First Aid Training

When I was a student of class ten, a doctor gave us training in first aid for ten days. The training proved very useful and was of great help later in life. I received a certificate after the end of the training programme. In 1929, while I was studying at the Cuttack Training College, I attended another first aid training programme. As I had attended it earlier, I was given a certificate, which was different from those issued to others.

Kanhailal Sharma

When I was a student in Patna, I once went to hear a lecture delivered by a person called Kanhailal Sharma. Later, I went through two books authored by him. One of these was titled *History of Jesus Christ*. These two books did not exert any influence on me. I thought that there was no harm in thinking that there was nobody called Jesus Christ. Like Jesus Christ of the *Bible*, famous persons like Rama and Krishna of our *puranas*, too, might be products of poetic imagination. Are Rama, Krishna not ideal persons? Similarly, Jesus Christ was an ideal person.

Dr Rajendra Prasad

The unrivalled leader of Bihar, Dr Rajendra Prasad, often stayed here and sold *khadi*. One day I bought a piece of *khadi* cloth from his Sadakat Ashram. Dr Rajendra Prasad came to Bhubaneswar to lay the foundation stone of Utkal University after he became the President of India. As a member of the senate, I got an opportunity to see him.

Annie Beasant

One day, Annie Beasant delivered a lecture at the New Colony in Patna. Many Englishmen and women were present at this meeting. Annie Beasant described in high-flown language Britain's imperialist rule in Ireland and India. Many sahibs left the meeting place. I have never listened to such a thought-provoking lecture delivered in flawless English from anyone.

The Tiger of Bengal

I remember one incident, which had occurred while I was studying at Puri Zilla School. Sir Ashutosh Mukherjee was then the Vice-Chancellor of Calcutta University. He had differences of

opinion with the Governor of Bengal, and these were given wide publicity by newspapers. Sir Ashutosh's photograph was published in *The Calcutta Review* and it was given the caption, 'The Tiger of Bengal'.

One day, while I was taking a stroll on the beach at Puri in the evening, I saw an old man in simple attire, a cane in his hand, sitting on the sands, and gazing out at the sea. I walked past him. His face seemed familiar to me. It seemed to me that he was the 'Tiger of Bengal'. I turned round, observed him keenly and became convinced that he was. So I went over to him and bowed to him respectfully. He asked me in Bangla, "Do you know me? What do you do?" I told him that I was a school student. He said to me a few words by way of advice, "Work hard at your studies." He was a great man, and yet he was so simple and so unassuming!

After many years, his son, Shymaprasad Mukherjee, who was an equally famous man, came to Cuttack.

His features resembled those of his father's. It is said that, if a person rides a horse, his son too learns to ride it.

The Lion of Punjab

It was the year 1925 or 1926. By this time I had taken up a salaried job. I had come to Puri on some work. I learnt that a meeting was being held at the residence of Satyabadi Das in Pathuria lane. I stood outside and saw Lalaji sitting on a cushion on one side. Big pillows had been placed at his back and on both his sides. Facing him sat a few leaders of Orissa on a carpet. They included Pundit Gopabandhu Das, Banamali Das, Dhanapati Banerjee and a few others. Someone motioned to me, asking me to come in. I went in and sat in the last row.

Lalaji asked, "Will our discussion be held in Hindi or in English?" Gopabandhu babu said, "Many here cannot express

themselves in Hindi; let the discussion be held in English." Then Lalaji said, "Let your chief representative come to the front." Many pushed Dhanapati babu to the front. Lalaji's strong physique and tiger-like moustache, his grave voice inspired fear in everyone. It was learnt that he trembled so much while delivering lectures at Congress meetings that people were always ready to hold him lest he should fall. He was truly the 'Lion of Punjab'. There was no doubt that Advocate Dhanapati babu was the suitable person to occupy a place next to him as he physically resembled Lalaji.

He had come with the aim of setting up a branch of the Hindu Association in Orissa. At first, he made inquiries about the population of Orissa, the number of Hindus, the number of Muslims in the province. The gentlemen who were present at the meeting gave varying replies to his question. He himself stated the correct figure and asked, "How many muslim associations are there in Orissa?" Somebody said 'one', and someone else one said 'two'. He himself again gave the correct figure. In the meanwhile, Gopabandhu babu went to some people and talked to them in a low voice. Finally, Gopabandhu babu said, 'The Hindu-Muslim unity which one comes across in Orissa is not to be found anywhere else in India. If a Hindu Association is set up here, the Muslims may feel suspicious. So, it is not necessary to set up one.' Lalaji said, excitedly, "I find your argument very strange. Hindus who constitute ninety seven percent of the population of the province should not form any association whereas Muslims who constitute only three percent of the population have three associations! Who can guarantee that Puri will not turn into another a Kohat one day?" A riot between the Hindus and Muslims had broken out in a place called Kohat.

Finally, it was decided that a branch of the Hindu Association would be formed in Orissa and if I remember rightly, Pundit

Nilakantha Das was entrusted with the task of setting up the association.

Serving in a Feudatory State

Let me now give an account of my experience of working in a feudatory state. Lokanath babu, who was the inspector of schools of Puri district, had told me earlier that serving in a feudatory state was almost as good as serving under the British government. I found that what he had said was true. Here, the administrative system was exactly like the one put in place in provinces ruled by the British. Boud was a small state. It spread over 1264 square miles and its annual income was about five lakh rupees. In 1837 its area was more than two thousand square miles. But the British government wrested administration of the whole of Kandhamal comprising eight hundred square miles from the then king as he could not stop the Kondhs from practising human sacrifice and had failed to kill the rebel Kondh chief of Ghumusur, Chakara Bisoi. The kingdom of Angul came under direct British rule for the same reason. According to the 1931 census, the total population of Boud was 1,35,564. The king paid six hundred rupees annually as tax to the British government.

Although the income of the state was a small one, the king had to look after a number of departments such as education, health, administration, revenue, forest, public works, and police. The king himself was the head of the state, but the management of the administration was the responsibility of a dewan. The latter was vested with the powers of a magistrate. All the employees of the state worked under him. Only the police department lay under the direct supervision of the king. The budget of the state had to be approved by the political agent.

The dewan was assisted by an assistant dewan. Both the dewan

and his assistant enjoyed judicial powers. There were several other officials: a forest officer to manage the forest department, a chief medical officer to head the health department, a veterinary surgeon to take care of the cattle, an overseer (later an engineer) to run the public works department. The king was the highest official of the police department, and an inspector and a few sub-inspectors worked under him. The education department was placed under the charge of the assistant dewan and his sub-ordinates included a sub-inspector and an assistant sub-inspector.

The state bore all the expenses incurred by the king and his family. The king and his queen also received a small allowance. They could spend this amount in any way they liked. The palace was an attractive *pucca* building. The cutcherry and the King Edward VIII School were also housed in *pucca* buildings.

I joined as the headmaster of King Edward VIII School. It was a minor school. The infrastructure of the school seemed quite satisfactory. The school had four classes—from class four to class seven. The tuition fee was one anna for class four students and four annas for students of class seven. At the time, in schools in Mogulbandi areas, the tuition fee for those studying in class four and class five was one rupee and four annas, and those studying in class six and class seven paid one rupee and eight annas.

My colleagues were hardworking and obedient. I felt that I had got the job that best suited me. But I faced difficulty in understanding the local language. People here spoke a dialect of Oriya. A few days after I had joined the school, the lower primary scholarship examination was held. For most of the subjects, oral tests were conducted. The question papers had already been prepared. I conducted the examination as the superintendent. At times I could not follow the answers given by the students. The head pundit of the school, who hailed from Puri district, had served

in that school for a long time. I sought his help to understand the meanings of certain words. It took me a while to get used to the local language.

One day, I was summoned by the king. I presented myself before him. Unlike others, I never used phrases like, 'Your Honour,' 'Your Grace', 'Huzoor,' 'Raja sahib' while speaking to him. But I never noticed even the slightest displeasure in the Raja sahib on account of this. During the discussion, he said, "The purpose of bringing you here is to upgrade this minor school to a high school. The responsibility of making it a good high school rests on you." I thanked the Raja sahib for his faith in me and took leave of him.

The next day, I received an order written out by the Raja sahib himself, "Submit a written proposal for setting up a high school."

I prepared a proposal and a cost estimate and showed it to the dewan.

The dewan, Raghabananda Pattanaik, was an experienced elderly person. I held him in high esteem. Having gone through my draft, he said, "It's very well done. Send it to *your* king."

The manner in which he said this surprised me. I said, "I thought I should first show it to you. I have to send it through you."

He smiled and said, mockingly, "No, no, it is not necessary to send it through me. The king has sent it directly to you; so you should send it directly to him."

Then it struck me that, according to official procedures followed in the state, the Raja sahib should have sent this order through the dewan instead of sending it directly to me. I inferred from it that the king must have had differences of opinion with the dewan on the issue of setting up a high school. Later, my

suspicions were confirmed.

I sent my draft to the Raja sahib. I spoke to the dewan on this matter. He said, "Sonepur, Dhenkanal and Bolangir each of these kingdoms has a high school. So our king wants to set up a high school here, but setting up a high school in a place like this amounts to throwing money down the drains. At present, when we send a student to Cuttack to study in a high school, we give him a scholarship of twenty rupees per month. In this way, we get one matriculate spending only two hundred and forty rupees a year. Here, people are not at all interested in education. If a high school is set up, at least seven thousand rupees will have to be spent annually. Yet it is doubtful if even one or two students will pass the matriculation examination in a year. So, I had suggested that we should send five students to Cuttack every year giving them scholarships. This would yield better results and involve less expenditure. But the king insists on setting up a high school. Let him do whatever he wants."

The dewan seemed to have a point, but the wish of the king had to be respected. Although I no longer felt very enthusiastic after my discussion with the dewan about the project, I had to carry out the king's orders. The dewan always showed respect to the king, but he never hesitated to give his own independent opinions on official matters, and the king often did not accept the dewan's views.

It was decided that class eight would be opened from the new session. Necessary preparations were made. A room was arranged; benches and desks were brought in; books were purchased for the library; new teachers were appointed. I wrote the inaugural address to be delivered by the king. I had suggested in that speech that the school should be named Jogindra Dev High School after the king's father, late Jogindra Dev, who had once opened two higher classes

in the school, but had discontinued these for some reason. He removed this portion of the speech and wrote in its place that the school will continue to be known as King Edward VII High School. He read out the speech at the inaugural function. Later, the same school came to be named Jogindra Dev High school. I do not know when and how this change took place.

A funny thing happened during the inauguration of the new classroom. After the public meeting, the king, a pair of scissors in hand, proceeded to cut the silk ribbon, which had been tied at the entrance of the room. The dewan and I flanked him. The old peon of the school, Kuber, who also doubled as the gardener, thought that a ribbon was preventing the king from entering the room. He suddenly pushed his way through the crowd and cut the ribbon. I was stunned. But the dewan promptly picked up the ribbon from the floor, stood holding it at one side of the door. The king cut the ribbon and inaugurated the classroom.

Class eight was opened. According to my proposal, the tuition fees were increased almost four-fold. Of course, the number of free studentships was doubled at the same time and eighth class students were provided with more assistance from the poor students fund. Earlier, the tuition fees for class eight had amounted to one rupee. So increasing the amount of the tuition fees made me very unpopular. People criticised me severely at my back.

I also became the target of criticism in another incident. I had written two essays on the language of Boud, which were published in the *Sahakara*. These were written from a philological point of view, but the educated natives of Boud spread the word that, as I belonged to Cuttack, I ridiculed the language of the people of Boud. After this, I gave up the intention of writing any more essays on this topic.

The number of students in class eight was not upto our

expectations. At this time, lower primary education was compulsory. Primary education was free and compulsory in almost all feudatory states because of the keen interest taken by the Agency Inspector, H. Dippie. But higher education was optional. There was fear of being fined and punished if one did not send one's children to primary schools. No such fear goaded people when it came to sending their children to high schools. As a result, few students enrolled themselves in high schools.

People really did not understand the value of education and sent their children to school only under compulsion. As a result, though children were compelled to remain present in primary schools, few were genuinely interested in studies. Parents wanted that, after spending three to four years in a school, their children should be set free so that they could graze cattle, fetch fire-wood or fruits from the jungle and contribute to the family income. Under circumstances like these, increasing the number of students in the newly set up high school was not to be expected. Class nine was opened. In the mean time, I said to the king that a few minor schools should be opened in the state in order to bring more students to the high school. He accepted my proposal, for he was convinced that the spread of education was essential for the development of his kingdom. He consulted the dewan, and they both decided that an education officer, who would take charge of the education department, would be appointed. My name was proposed for this post. One day, the dewan sahib said to me, "The king wants to appoint you as the education officer." I said, "I have no such ambition. I am quite content with my life as the headmaster."

All the same, I came to be appointed as the education officer. My salary was increased from one hundred rupees to two hundred rupees per month, and I was entitled to a monthly travelling

allowance of twenty rupees. On the whole, I received forty rupees more than the salary I was getting earlier. I liked this change in my financial situation. Sri Madhav Chaudhury replaced me at the school. He is now a renowned pleader at Nayagarh.

I concentrated on my new job. There were around sixty primary schools, one Sanskrit *tol*, one training school, one *makatab* and one high school in the kingdom. The last four institutions were situated at Boud garh itself. I inspected a few primary schools located in the areas nearby. The student strength of the schools was satisfactory; but students as well as their guardians displayed little interest in education.

Some areas of the state were inhabited by kondhs. Kondhs are divided into two categories: rustic Kondhs and naked Kondhs. The rustic Kondhs put on *gamchhas*, short *dhotis* etc; they also engaged in agriculture. But the naked Kondhs lived in the jungle. Their men wore narrow strips of clothes. Whenever they stirred out, which they did but rarely, they put on *gamchhas*. Their women were almost naked; they wore narrow pieces of clothes. If they saw anybody, they would only throw a piece of cloth over their breasts. They lived on forest products. In a sense, they had nothing to do with modern civilization. Their main weapons were bows and arrows, which they used for hunting purposes. I remember that there was only one primary school in the areas inhabited by naked Kondhs and I had gone to inspect that school only once.

The king wanted his state to develop in the fields of education and health. He set up minor schools, one each at Puruna Cuttack and Kantamala. He also established a dispensary at Kantamala. I accompanied the dewan, the chief medical officer, and others. Two elephants accompanied us. The royal priest had chosen an auspicious moment for starting our journey. We set out at the appointed time, but many obstacles came our way.

After we had covered some distance, someone put the king's cap on Shukla's head for the fun of it. The cap was now considered no longer suitable for the king's use. So a man went back all the way to Boud garh to bring another cap. As it rained heavily on the way, we halted in a schoolroom at Baunshuni. The rain continued unabated till the next day. It was late when the rain finally subsided, and we resumed our journey. A funny thing happened on the way. Around five persons were busy working in the fields by the roadside. The elephants carrying us walked along the road. A few constables and some other people followed them. The peasants who were working in the fields looked up at the elephants and their riders and then went on doing their work. A constable went up to them and said, "Hey! You did not bow to the Raja sahib. How dare you neglect to do this?" These men immediately threw themselves at the feet of that constable. We watched this scene sitting on the elephants. The Raja sahib observed, smiling, "These men understood the words of the constable and bowed to him. They know that the constable can land blows on them, but I can't do so."

Again it started pouring with rain. So we stopped at Manamunda. Meals were arranged for all of us at the dak bungalow. A bus belonging to a rich marwari took us there and brought us back to our resting-place after we had our meals.

The rains did not stop. So we had to stay at Manamunda for about three days. The auspicious time, which the royal priest had fixed for the inauguration of the school and the hospital passed. So another auspicious moment had to be chosen. Everybody looked upon me as a very learned person. So I was consulted. I knew how to choose an auspicious time for a person by consulting the almanac. But in order to do that I needed to know the person's zodiac sign. When I said this, a serious problem arose - nobody

knew the king's the zodiac sign except the king himself and the royal priest. It was always kept a closely guarded secret. Those who were close to the king sought his advice as to whether it was desirable to reveal the secret to a man like me, who hailed from Cuttack. But the Raja sahib disclosed the secret to me. Consulting the almanac, I decided on a particular time. But I had little confidence in my knowledge of astrology. So I said that the royal priest should be consulted. Instead of sending a man to the garh in that stormy weather, a messenger was sent to Sonepur, and from there he sent a telegram to the priest. A reply from him arrived from Boud garh promptly. It was found that the Rajguru had fixed the same time, which I had suggested earlier. By sheer luck, I became in the eyes of everyone in the royal entourage a great astrologer. Luckily, never again had I to face a test of my knowledge of astrology, and people never got to find out how little I knew about astrology.

A minor school was also set up at Puruna Cuttack, but it also faced the same problem of shortage of students. One day, I suggested to the Raja sahib, "If you would personally go and persuade your subjects, we may be more successful in our endeavour."

Summons were sent to the parents of those pupils who had passed class three from primary schools located around Puruna Cuttack: "Present yourself at the palace at Puruna Cuttack on such and such date with your son." The king appeared before them at the appointed time and explained to them the benefits of education. Then every guardian was summoned and his ward was admitted. Some of them objected to and opposed our proposal. We tried to persuade some people by coaxing them. In some instances, however, we had to frighten guardians into sending their children to school. About ten children were admitted in this way.

We had to deal with a difficult child. His father said, "I want to educate him, but he is unwilling to study. What can I do?" When the child was asked, he only said, "I don't want to study." In a situation like this, we had no option but to instill fear in him. Two constables stood on either side and pointed the barrels of their guns at him and threatened to kill him. But this did not scare him at all, and he kept repeating, "I don't want to study." Then we told him, "You will be tied to the wheels of a car and when it starts running, you will be dragged to death." This did not frighten him either. Simply by repeating, '*I don't want to study*', he completely defeated us. Finally, fearing that his attitude might affect that of the other children, we sent him away.

My Work

I worked tirelessly for the spread of primary education in Boud. I toured the state for fifteen days every month. No *pucca* roads then served the rural areas. Many places were inaccessible. So I always kept a horse with me. One also had to worry about attacks by tigers. It was impossible to travel without taking escorts. *Sarbakaras* provided us with escorts. At the beginning of every academic session, the head pundit of every school sent a list of the pupils above the age of six, who were eligible to study in his school, to my office. A notice was sent to each child's parents from my office saying, "Admit so and so, your son or daughter into such and such school by such and such date, failing which you will be penalised." Those who did not admit their children into a school were served with the notice again and again; some of them were fined. I could not rest even after children were admitted into schools. Students did not have to pay any tuition fees in schools; but they had to pay one paisa fine for every day they remained absent from school. The head pundit collected this

fine and sent it to the treasury or to my office. The head pundit also sent the list of those persons from whom he had failed to collect the fine. It was the job of either the *nazir* or the local police inspector to collect this fine. If they failed, the movable property of the accused was auctioned off and the fine was realised from the money so collected. However, the last mentioned course was never resorted to.

Sometimes we received applications for striking off the name of a pupil. Initially, the power to strike off the name rested with the King himself. Later, that power was delegated to me. I studied the rules concerning this carefully and came to know that there were plenty of opportunities for corruption in applying the rules. Some head pundits took bribes up to two rupees to recommend an application for striking off a name. I heard that head pundits earned hundreds of rupees in this way.

One day an applicant came to my residence bringing about two seers of butter. I did not accept the gift and asked him to go away. As he would not listen to reason, a case was filed against him. He was fined five rupees in the court of the assistant dewan. The price of the butter was not more than two rupees.

I once prepared a list of some books I wanted to be bought for the library of the high school and asked for a grant. The money was granted and the books were purchased. A few days passed. One day, I called upon the king. He asked me, "Why has *Vedanta* been purchased for the library? Who will read this book?" I was surprised. When I said that no such book figured in my list, he said, "I distinctly remember that there was a book titled *Vedanta* in it." I remembered that I had included *Vendetta*, a novel written by Marie Correlli in the list. I said, "Perhaps you have mistaken *Vendetta* for *Vedanta*." I felt put off when I was asked about the reason for including this book in the list. The Raja sahib borrowed

this book from the library and read it through.

Kirmakhole and Narayanprasad are two kondh villages. The latter was named after the Raja sahib. One day, the physical instructor, Sri Radhashyam Das, who had introduced the system of daily exercise, and I went to one of these villages riding an elephant. Mistaking me for a revenue collector, the menfolk of the villages fled into the jungle. Some Kondh women had tattooed their bodies from top to toe. We knew that Kondhs of Phulbani never tattooed their bodies. The women, who had not tattooed their bodies, belonged to Kandhamal. No paddy or rice nor even metal utensils were found in their homes. We learnt that they lived on roots, fruits and flowers they gathered from the jungle. They cooked in pots made of sal leaves plastered with clay and ate off leaf-plates.

On another occasion, when I went to inspect a school, a Kondh teacher's son had taken ill. The Kondhs had arranged to sacrifice a cock, and an exorcist, who was called Jani, uttered mantras. I said to the teacher, "You are an educated person. How could you do these things instead of going to the hospital at Khajuriapada and bringing medicine? In what way are you better than the others who are ignorant." He said humbly, "If I had gone to the hospital instead of calling the Jani, members of my caste would have excommunicated and fined me."

One day, the Raja sahib decided to set up a library in the palace in the name of his late father, Jogindra Dev. I was asked to write a short biography of Jogindra Dev. I was not a native of Boud. Moreover, Jogindra Dev had been dead for more than twenty years. So I sought the King's permission to collect information on him in the record room. I was given permission to copy necessary information from the records, but was told not to bring any paper outside. Not much could be found on Jogindra Dev from the

records. Nevertheless I could gather some interesting information on him. The Agent of the British government had referred to the king of Boud as 'zamindar' in many documents. The king had been blamed for his failure to stop the practice of *meria*. The late king had written, "We have set up police outposts and we exercise control over the kondhs. Human sacrifice no longer takes place in our state." In another letter, the government sent the following instruction: "Chakara Bisoi, who is opposed to the government, is hiding in your state. Catch him and bring him over to Sambalpur." The king's reply was: "We have searched everywhere for him. Chakara Bisoi is not hiding in our state."

In fact, during the first half of the nineteenth century, kings were extremely afraid of the Kondhs. The Kondhs would get united and encircle the garh at the slightest provocation. Human sacrifice was prevalent among them. Chakara Bisoi and Dohara Bisoi found shelter in Boud. Later, the British government took Kandhamala away from the king of Boud, and caught Kondhs and meted out severe punishments to them.

Later, the king of Boud pleaded with the British government several times asking them to restore to him Kandhamala. The British government said that it was ready to return the kingdom provided the king paid back whatever the government had spent on suppressing the Kondhs and on the administration of the state. This amount had gradually increased and had reached ten lakhs. The king offered to repay the amount in annual installments of three thousand rupees, to which no reply came.

Fakir Sahani was the oldest person in Boud. When I met him, he was above eighty years. He received a pension from the state, and had visited many places of pilgrimage in India along with King Jogindra Dev. I got many details about the king from him. I

also referred to old diaries written by the late king. Basing on these facts, I wrote a biography, which the Raja sahib very much appreciated.

As the Raja sahib had differences of opinion with the dewan, Raghabananda Pattanaik, he wrote to the political agent and got the dewan dismissed. Raghabananda babu was ordered to go back to his earlier job of a clerk in the secretariat. The assistant dewan, Batakrisna Mohanty now assumed the office of the dewan. Sri Bankimchandra Pattanaik was appointed as the assistant dewan. After the integration of feudatory states, Bankim babu worked in the administrative department and was promoted to the post of an I.A.S. officer. Then he became a member of the Public Service Commission.

Batakrisna babu had not occupied the post of dewan for a long period. Yet, after the integration of feudatory states, the government posted him as Sub-Divisional Officer.

Many people came to the Raja sahib seeking financial assistance. Once Gopalchandra Praharaj, the renowned author, came to him to ask for help. He was put up in the guest house as an honoured guest of the state. He spoke to the dewan and me and tried to find out about the king's interests and concerns. When he came to know that the king wanted to get back Kandhamala from the British, he raised this issue during his meeting with the king and by his wits convinced the king that the demand was absolutely justified. During the discussion, Praharaj requested the Raja sahib to bear the expenses of printing one volume of *Purnachandra Encyclopedic Oriya Dictionary*. When the king asked him how much it would cost, Praharaj said it would cost five thousand rupees. The king gave a cheque of five thousand rupees without saying a word and assured Praharaj that he would purchase ten sets of the *Dictionary*. When he returned, Praharaj said to us sadly,

“I never thought that the king would readily give me whatever amount I asked for. Had I asked him for ten thousand rupees, he would have gladly given even that amount without hesitation.” The next day, Praharaj went back to the king and said, “After you build a temple, you need to plaster and white-wash it.” The king could not make sense of these words. Praharaj explained, “You asked me what the cost of the printing would be. I said that only the printing would require five thousand rupees. Another three thousand rupees will be needed to bind the volumes.” The Raja sahib promptly gave him three thousand rupees. The king had also given financial support for the publication of Golakachandra Pradhan’s *Indumati Kavya*, and for the printing of *Nitibara* written by Radhashyama Das. These incidents bear testimony to the generosity of the king. He had also borne the entire expenses of the third volume of *Purnachandra Encyclopedic Oriya Dictionary*.

It was decided to show various institutions of the state to Gopalchandra Praharaj. He travelled in a motor car provided by the state. I accompanied him to the hospital. I introduced Praharaj to the chief medical officer, Narendranath, and informed him of the king’s instruction to show him different sections of the hospital. But he did not leave his seat, called the junior doctor over, and said in Bangla, “Udaykar babu, please take him round the hospital.” The king came to hear of his insolent behaviour and punished him.

I had collected about five hundred words which were in use in Boud. I gave these to Praharaj. He said, “Not only here, but also in many border areas like Singhbhum, Ganjam, Phulajhars, Chhatishgarh, thousands of words like these are in use. I shall collect these words and put them in an appendix in the dictionary.” But he left this mortal world before he could do all this. When I published a short book titled *Children’s Shakespeare*, comprising

three stories based on Shakespeare's plays, I presented him with a copy. He wrote a note of appreciation about the book.

Social and Economic Conditions in Boud

When I worked as the headmaster of a school, I had no opportunity to find out about the conditions under which the local people lived. There was also no need for doing so. But, after I became an education officer, I came in direct contact with people living in rural the areas. At that time, prices of commodities were very low and I could live very comfortably spending only half my salary. In the villages, the *sarbarakaras*, who paid hundreds of rupees to the state, did not even have food grains in their houses which would last them for a year. At harvest time, they sold off paddy and rice to pay land revenue. They therefore lived in straitened circumstances during the last part of every year. Many lived on flowers. These flowers were dried and stored in packets made of straw and bound with the help of ropes. They mixed dried flowers with a little rice or black gram, ground these and boiled the mixture to prepare a kind of gruel. Poor people spent weeks searching for food in the jungle. They ate fruits like kendu and drank water from the streams.

An intoxicating drink was prepared from mahua fruit. The fruit of mahua is called *kara*. A substance like butter was prepared from the juice of *kara*. It was mixed with clarified butter and sold. If one took it, one got a reeling sensation in one's head.

The standard of living of ordinary people was very low. Though commodities were cheap, people did not have the money to buy them.

The treasury of the state faced problems, especially in the months of August and September, when the salaries could not be paid to employees on time. At this time of the year, all touring

officers were empowered to collect land revenue. I once did this job, and collected about twenty-five rupees.

The natives of Boud were very good in comparison to those of Sonepur and Sambalpur. Women belonging to *Khadala*, *Dumala* tribes worked in fields. They collected firewood from the jungle. Some of them worked as maidservants. Sometimes they gave birth to illegitimate children. But they never killed these babies to make themselves appear chaste before the world. Such things in Mogulbundi areas also occurred, but these did not come into public notice. People concealed their sins and made themselves appear virtuous, but those who do not strive to conceal their sins are more deserving of praise than people like us.

A woman used to come and wash dishes at our house. She brought a baby son about one and half years old with her. The child looked very handsome. If there was any leftover rice and curry at our house, she fed him that. I heard that somebody from the palace had wanted to bring up that child, but the woman had refused to give him away.

I once went to inspect Manamunda girls' school. There I saw a girl who was about twelve. She was very beautiful to look at. She stood out from her fellow students. I thought that she must be the daughter of an employee belonging to Cuttack. Unable to suppress my curiosity, I asked the lady teacher, "Whose daughter is she?" She said, shyly, "Mine". I knew that the lady teacher, who hailed from Cuttack, was a spinster. I crossed the limits of decency and muttered in surprise, "But you are not married!" She said, "This girl is not born to me. I have adopted her. One day, I had gone to the garh. At that time, Abdush Satar Khan was the superintendent. Somebody had left this baby by the roadside. The superintendent wanted to give her to somebody to bring her up. I brought her with me." Later, I learnt that this girl, after undergoing

teachers' training in Cuttack, became a schoolteacher.

Sometimes, the issue of illegitimacy gave rise to social problems. One day, I had gone to discuss a matter with the Raja sahib. Sitting on the veranda of the palace, the Raja sahib was engaged in sorting out some problems.

A certain young man worked as a peon at the cutcherry. As fishermen did not allow him to be a member of their community, he had filed a petition against them. The former defended themselves saying, "We cannot take him into our caste. His mother is a fisherwoman, but his father is a brahmin. How can we accept someone like him?" The Raja sahib wanted that members of his caste should accept the young man. But the headmen of the caste were stubborn. The Raja sahib explained, "As his father is a brahmin, the child certainly belongs to a caste higher than that of the fishermen. They should therefore accept the boy into their caste." But the headmen did not buy this argument. The Raja sahib said, "The headmen of the caste in other villages will be summoned, and the matter will be decided by them all." Both the parties left.

All this while, I was sitting silently. After they had left, the Raja sahib asked me, "What decision on a matter like this would have been taken in Mogulbandi?" I said, "Such a case would never have been brought to the court of British government. There, the child would never have seen the light of day. How could he then grow up and demand to be accepted as a member of a caste?"

The Raja sahib smiled and kept quiet.

Politics in Feudatory States

Sri Gopalchandra Praharaj published a few essays under the title 'Swapnare Raja Yoga,' (Raja Yoga in a Dream) in the periodical, the *Utkal Sahitya*. In these, he had painted kings of

feudatory states as despotic, lecherous, drunkards and oppressors. But I found that in Boud, everything was done according to law. The king was an extremely courteous person. I had never imagined that any acts of debauchery or illegal deeds could occur in that state. But gradually, I felt that, though the king was possessed of many good qualities, he was not an impartial person.

The inhabitants of the state outwardly feared and respected officers, who hailed from Mogulbundi, but in their heart of hearts they hated them. The reason was this: they had the impression that those who hailed from Mogulbandi areas were taking away all the money of their state. In fact, except a few clerks, schoolmasters, peons, and such lower-level employees, all the high officials in all the departments belonged to Cuttack, that is to say they came from outside the state. But the private secretary of the king, Sri Garudadhwaaja Mishra, the caretaker of the palace, and those who were really close to the king, were local people. The king turned a blind eye to the faults of local employees, but he kept a close watch on those who hailed from Cuttack.

A number of allegations were once brought against an employee of the settlement department to the Raja sahib. When Raghabananda babu came to know of this, he helped this man to leave the state before any action could be taken against him. Similarly, a man from Balasore got appointed as the second master at a minor school, stating in his application that he had appeared for the B.A. examination from Uttarapada College. But it was doubtful if he had really passed even I.A. Later, the dewan and I found out that he had furnished false information. I advised him to flee the state immediately. In fact, had his crime been detected, he might have been thrown into jail. Once he was out of the state, it was not easy to capture him in Mogulbandi areas, and punish him.

One day, at night, a gentleman called Chakradhar Pattanaik knocked on my door. It was pouring with rain, and he was wet through. I gave him dry clothes. He said that it would be dangerous on my part to give him shelter. He said that he used to be a great favourite of the king at one time and was his Aide de Camp. But he was now the target of his wrath. He told me that the king was a drunkard, and that he had suspended him. He did not find shelter anywhere. As the police department was under the king, the dewan could not offer him any protection. He showed me a document containing information on acts of the oppression and injustice committed by the king. Later, the dewan allowed him to stay at his residence. The king made a trip to Calcutta; so all powers of the state including the power to run the police department passed into the hands of the dewan. At this time, the dewan allowed him to escape.

Another person was the police inspector of the state. If I remember right, his name was Nilankantha Mishra and he hailed from Puri district. He had gone home taking leave. As soon as he joined after the period of his leave came to an end, he received an order: "Hand over the charge immediately to such and such person. A chargesheet is being framed against you." After handing over the charge, he came to my house. Luckily, he had left his family in his village. As he said that he would take whatever amount I would pay for his belongings, I gave him only ten rupees. A list of allegations was prepared against him to be forwarded to the political agent. I never knew whether any action was taken against him. At that time, his son, Manmohan Mishra, was a student of Angul High School. He is now a renowned labour-leader.

One day, the Raja sahib gave a strange order on one of my files, which revealed his lack of fairness. The dewan, Raghabananda babu, returned it, writing, "Rules have to be

followed, for administration is not a matter of sentiments.” That file never came back to me.

Let me recount another incident. The tahsildar of the state, who belonged to the royal family, asked the king to advance him a sum of money for his marriage. The Rajasaheb asked him to write out a formal application requesting for it. The dewan recorded the following opinion on this application, “There is provision for advancing money for purchasing motor cars, houses etc. in the law-books; but I find no information in them on giving an advance for a marriage. However, as the ruler has decided to allow this, he may be given an advance.’

A young man called Prahallad Bisi passed the matriculation examination, and went to Cuttack to undergo teachers’ training there. While he was studying, the Raja sahib also provided him with some financial assistance. He was related to a man called Kartik Kheti, who was very close to the king. When he returned to Boud after completing his training, he was appointed as the headmaster of the training school. Later, he got suspended for a negligible offence. One evening, I received the following order: “Prahallad Bisi is accused under section 120(B) of the Penal code.” In other words, he was charged with sedition. I was shocked. By the time I came to know of this, the police had arrested him. Later, I learnt that some news items relating to the oppression of subjects in Boud had been published in the newspaper the *Asha*, which was being published from Berhampur. Some said that the king’s sister’s husband, Lalsaheb of Khadial, was to blame for this, not the Raja sahib.

Anyway, Prahallad Bisi got released from jail after a few days. He earned fame by teaching at Cuttack Mission School. After retirement, he settled in Boud, became one of its reputed residents, and set up a college there. The case of Prahallad Bisi had quietened down by the time I left Boud.

Doctor Udayakar Mishra was an intimate friend of mine. He was an ex-student of Satyabadi School. He was very independent-minded like Gopabandhu and Godavarish. He always wore coarse cotton clothes. He served as the junior doctor. His was subordinate to the chief medical officer at the Sadar hospital, but his fame as a doctor had far exceeded that of his senior. I give here one or two instances of his independent-mindedness.

One day, the Raja sahib sent for him. When he reached the palace, while he was climbing the veranda, the constable on guard duty said, "Sir, don't climb the veranda with you shoes on." He replied, "Shall I keep my shoes on your head." Some unpleasant incidents might have occurred had the Raja sahib not arrived there at that moment.

On another occasion, during the Durga Puja, the Raja sahib accompanied the image of the goddess, when it was taken round the villages. It was evening. Many employees and inhabitants of the town accompanied the king. My residence stood on the side of the road. Udayakar and I were exchanging small talk sitting in the outer room. Out of politeness, we both came out and joined the procession. It was 8.30 p.m. by the time we reached our houses. When the procession came near our houses, we decided to slip away quietly. But the Raja sahib wanted us to go up to the palace and then join him in playing a game of bridge.

Noticing that we were trying to slip away, he said to a police inspector who was near him, "Go and call the two of them." The inspector passed the order to a constable. The constable came running, got on to the veranda of my house and spreading both his hands said, "The Inspector sahib asks you to go back and join the procession."

Udayakar had just stepped on one of the steps leading up to the veranda and I was following him. Suddenly Udayakar gave

the constable a slap and said, "Go and tell your inspector that we won't go without a warrant." The poor constable went back and complained to the inspector about this. The matter reached the king's ears. Annoyed with the inspector, he said, "You don't have any commonsense. Instead of going to call the two senior officers yourself, how could you send a constable? It has served him right."

The state sent Udayakar to Cuttack to undergo training on the treatment of leprosy. During his absence, I went to his house almost every day and took care of his daughter, Bharati, and his son, Nityananda. A few days later, Udayakar returned to Boud. On noticing a patch on each of my cheeks, he suspected that it could be the first stage of leprosy and applied some medicines to one patch and bandaged it. He said that he would cauterise the other patch after this wound healed. One day, I ran into the chief medical officer. On hearing everything from me and examining my cheeks, he said in Bangla, "After undergoing training, every ailment looks like an attack of leprosy to Udayakar babu." As instructed by him, I rubbed the juice of tulsi leaves and salt on the patch on my other cheek. The patch disappeared after about ten days. The wound on the other side also healed.

I cannot resist the temptation of narrating a few more incidents. The state observed a few festivals or special holidays. These included the birthday of the king, the day of his coronation, Holi, *Srabanabhisheka*, *Pushyabhisheka* and such other holidays.

On the occasion of the birthday of the Raja sahib, a ceremony called 'turmeric-play' was held in the palace in the morning. Turmeric powder was kept in a big cooking pot. The employees would put a little turmeric powder on the forehead of the Raja sahib, and then threw turmeric powder at each other. They indulged in similar fun using *abira* during the Holi festival. But the Holi celebration was not confined only to the palace. The Raja sahib

and his employees toured the town riding elephants. *Abira* powder and pots of water mixed with *ahira* were kept ready on elephants. People celebrated Holi throwing *ahira* and sprinkling *abira*- water each other through garden syringes.

On some festive occasions, feasts were arranged in the palace. One day, while I and Udayakar were sitting in the outer room of my residence, a servant from the palace came in and handed out a piece of paper to each of us and said, "You are invited to the feast." Nothing was written on the piece of paper. These were about three inches in length and width and the words "Jogindra Vilas Palace, Baudraj" had been printed on them. When we enquired about it, the servant said, "The palace supervisor has sent these inviting you to the feast."

Immediately we wrote to the palace supervisor, "We have received these two pieces of papers sent by you. As nothing is written on these, we feel compelled to return them. We will be obliged if you would let us know what you really want us to do."

We signed the piece of paper and sent it through the messenger. The palace supervisor must have informed the king about this. After about three hours, proper invitation letters printed at Jagdish press were sent to us.

The Raja sahib was very fond of sports. He acted as a referee in sports like football. Games of bridge were played at the club on most of the nights. Raghabananda babu never went to play as long as he was the dewan. I never knew how to play cards. I learnt how to play bridge for the first time here. The Raja sahib never left playing a game until he won. Sometimes, when the game continued late into the night, the king's rivals deliberately made him win so as to bring the game to an end.

Though the Raja sahib was so friendly by nature, while working in the cutcherry or in the office, he assumed a grave demeanour.

A high official of the government once came to explore the possibilities of delegating more powers to the kings of feudatory states. The Raja sahib and his staff called on the sahib. The dewan was introduced to him, and then the dewan introduced the others to him one by one. The sahib shook hands with everybody. He asked me, "Are you a Bengali." When I said that I was not a Bengali but an Oriya, he murmured, "I have seen Bengali headmasters in all the feudatory states I have visited." The sahib also inspected the school and the hostel.

A few days later, the Raja sahib was endowed with sessions power, that is, the power to judge cases, which were earlier being sent to the sessions court for trial, on the recommendation of the sahib. Earlier, the Raja sahib had referred a murder case to the higher authorities. It was now sent back to the Raja sahib for trial. As the accused lived in abject poverty, a pleader was appointed by the state to defend him.

Sri Birakishore Ray, who later on became the chief justice of the High Court, pleaded on behalf of the state and Sri Damodar Kar defended the accused. The Raja sahib sentenced him to three years of imprisonment finding him guilty of culpable homicide, not murder. The accused felt outraged and exclaimed, "Such foolish verdict pronounced by a king!"

I can never forget the help which I received from Udayakar Mishra. Though I had been married for eight years, I was not blessed with a child. Everyone thought that my wife was barren. Once she felt very weak for a long period. On examining her, Udayakar said, "She is not suffering from any disease; she has conceived." I felt very glad to hear this.

One day, my wife suffered a slight pain. Thinking that the time of delivery was approaching, I requested the Raja sahib to send the lady doctor, who was a European. Her name was L.F.

Cornebi. The Raja sahib said, "Whenever you need her services feel free to send for her." He also ordered the driver to bring the lady doctor over.

The lady doctor came and waited at my residence for about six hours. She examined my wife. My wife's stomach pain stopped after a while. The lady doctor said that it would take three hours more for the delivery. We took our dinner and went to sleep.

Next day, I thought it would not be right to send for the lady doctor and to put her to unnecessary trouble. Around eleven in the morning, my wife suddenly suffered from terrible pain. I heard that Udayakar babu was then at the residence of the dewan, which lay very close to mine. It was but a minute's walk. I sent for him. When he arrived, it was just the time for the delivery of the baby. After some time, a baby daughter was born, but she was almost like a still-born child. She was unable to breathe.

Udayakar cut the umbilical cord. Earlier, he had given me a book titled *Labour Room Clinic* to read. He asked me to show him the pictures in it that showed how to restore the respiration of a new-born baby through artificial methods. In the mean time, the dewan had sent someone to bring cakes of glycerin soap and one new towel, and he himself waited outside. Looking at illustrations in the book, the doctor treated the baby. After five minutes, the baby showed signs of life.

Next day, it was found that some kind of temporary spasm shook the baby. Some local people said that she suffered from a disease called *gaja*. They advised me to keep cold water outside at night and to bathe the baby about five times with this water every day. I never wanted to inflict this and many such treatments on my daughter in the bitterly cold weather. Udayakar argued, "If the baby dies while being given a scientific treatment, you won't feel any guilt. However, if the baby dies as a result of the treatments

suggested by these ignorant people, you will regret your action all your life. You would feel, 'I killed the baby.'" His words convinced me. He prepared a bryonia mixture. The baby was only two days old; it was not possible to feed her that bitter medicine. I sent for the chief medical officer with the consent of Udayakar. Though he was an allopathic doctor, he used to dispense homeopathic medicine. The baby's spasm stopped after about eight days. The help of the lady doctor was no longer required. Later, we came to know that she had not studied medicine. She was a nurse in a small hospital in London. She was dismissed when her real qualifications were found out. The noble-minded Raja sahib did not punish her.

After the birth of my daughter, my wife suffered from stomach ailments. I depended on Udayakar for her treatment.

Raghabananda babu was a Vaishnav. He never even touched non-vegetarian food. He named my daughter, Bishnupriya, and Udayakar's son was named Nityananda, according to his suggestions.

The Raja sahib had a cousin, whose name was Shivakumar Deo. He was to succeed to the throne, as the Raja sahib was childless. The king had boundless trust in him, and the instructions issued by Deo were treated as royal orders. Later, however, the relationship soured, and the Raja sahib harassed him a lot. It was rumoured that he had tried to poison the Raja sahib. Around thirty years after I had left Boud and twenty years after the integration of feudatory states with Orissa, Deo sahib came to Christ College and met me. I could not recognise him at all. He used to wear silk coats, and hats. He was now wearing only coarse *dhoti* and *panjabi* and a Gandhi cap. He also wore Kabuli *chappals*. How much he had changed in thirty years!

In 1933, I was blessed with a son. As suggested by the dewan,

he was named Radhakrushna. The dewan, Raghabananda Pattanaik, left Boud a few days after my son was born.

In the mean time, I prepared to appear for M.A. examination in English and deposited the fees. I also arranged a boat for traveling to Cuttack and gave an advance to the boatman. Just one day before I was to set out for Cuttack, in the morning a boat dashed against a *bisham* in the river in front of my house and was broken to pieces. The passengers on board floated away. About four persons were rescued and sent to the hospital. Later, some were rescued at Athamallick. Earlier, I had sailed down river Mahanadi a couple of times accompanied by the Raja sahib. I had seen *bishams*, that is, boulders lying sub-merged in water. Boatmen skillfully sailed their boats skirting these. I could not imagine how these could threaten the lives of human beings. On seeing that heart-rending scene that day, I dared not sail to Cuttack to appear at the examination.

The Stream Changed its Course

I thought that I had found an ideal place of work. I thought I would spend the rest of my life here. The Raja sahib was satisfied with my work. Whatever salary I was getting was sufficient to satisfy my needs and supply the wants of my parents and brothers. I sent not less than forty rupees to my father every month. However, fate had decreed a different course of life.

I looked upon the generosity of the king with suspicion. On many occasions, he did not seem to act fairly. At times I thought, "Women and royal persons should never be trusted." The stream of my life changed its course under the pressure of circumstances.

My aim was to obtain a Master's degree at all costs. When I said that I wanted to read for M.Ed at Patna, the Raja sahib agreed to depute me on behalf of the state. I agreed to his proposal that I

would sign a contract promising to serve the state for a period of five years. The contract papers were prepared. It was stated there that I would receive my salary during the period of training. If I would not serve the state for five years after completing my training, I would pay back the amount I would have received during the period of training towards my salary. The dewan, Batakrishna babu got the king to approve of this contract and sent it to me for my signature. I complained that I would lose travelling allowance amounting to twenty rupees during the training period. How would I afford to stay at a place like Patna in a rented house? Here I enjoyed rent-free accommodation. In the event of my leaving for Patna I could not leave my family in Boud. I said that I should be given house-rent by the state to enable me to rent a house in Patna. The dewan wrote on my application: "According to the Bihar-Orissa Education Code, M.Ed. students are entitled to rent-free accommodation. Finding accommodation for his family is his responsibility; the state has nothing to do with it." The king endorsed the view of the dewan. I again submitted that the Bihar-Orissa Education code had nothing to do with my case. The rules mentioned there applied only to stipendiary students. Here, it was a matter involving the state and me. Though the education code said nothing about serving the state for five years after completion of training, I had agreed to do that. I enjoyed rent-free accommodation according to my service conditions. The state had supported my family. So in all fairness it could not be said that the state had no responsibility regarding where I would keep my family during the period of the training.

The Raja sahib and the dewan discussed the matter. Finally, the Raja sahib passed an order to the effect that, keeping the interest of the state in view, the education officer could not be deputed to read for M.Ed. that year. He said, "I am sorry to make the first blow of retrenchment axe fall on Sridhar babu."

I was on very good terms with Batakrishna babu. Our relationship did not turn sour after this incident. I called on him at his residence and we played together at the club. A curtain was drawn over this issue in this way. But the incident left me feeling sad.

Another incident added greatly to my dissatisfaction. Some teachers, who were natives of the state, conspired against a high-school teacher, who hailed from Cuttack and tried to disgrace him. He submitted a petition about this. The headmaster investigated the matter and took this teacher's side. I also opined in his favour. In this way, I got drawn into this quarrel. The teacher was a *Cuttackia*, the headmaster was a *Cuttackia* and the education officer was also a *Cuttackia*. So I became the main target of the teacher's enemies.

A complaint was made against me. The tension between the natives of the state and the outsiders, that is, *Cuttackias*, which had kept smouldering under ashes, now flared up. The dewan kept quiet and sent all the papers to the king. The summer vacation had started. I wrote several times to the king requesting him to pass his final orders on this file. I wrote that I would not be able to manage the education department if there was delay in taking a decision regarding the matter. At last, the king decided to exert himself. He instructed that no one would leave the headquarters although the vacation had begun. He decided to conduct the investigation afresh.

In fact, he himself conducted the enquiry and collected evidence from the persons concerned. Then he sent for me and wanted to discuss the matter with me. I said, "The matter is no longer confined to the education department at the moment. So the dewan should remain present during the discussion. Besides, complaints have been lodged against me." But the Raja sahib

would not listen to my suggestions and said, "No, the advice of the dewan is not necessary. Everything is now clear to me. Only a few changes should be introduced in the education department. It is enough to discuss with you." His view was that the complaint against the teacher mentioned earlier was false and was motivated by envy. All the persons involved in the matter should therefore be transferred. I did not agree to his proposal and said, "It will be wrong to transfer the innocent as well as the guilty at the same time. Let the persons who are to blame be transferred as a punishment. Later, when the situation becomes normal, the persons who are not to blame may get transferred." The Raja sahib did not pay heed to my opinion and sent for all the persons concerned. He said to the accused *Cuttackia* teacher in my presence, "You are not guilty, but under the circumstances I feel compelled to transfer you to such and such place." Similarly, he said to the two teachers, who had made mischief, "You have created disturbances for no reason. You can no longer remain at the headquarters. You are both transferred to such and such places." The *Cuttackia* teacher said only this, "It's my good luck that you have found me innocent. However, in spite of this, I find myself being punished."

The next day, the order not to leave the headquarters was rescinded. After consulting me, the *Cuttackia* teacher submitted his letter of resignation at my office and left Boud.

After receiving the resignation letter, the Raja sahib said to me, "I had never thought that the teacher would tender his resignation over such a trivial matter." I said, "He might have done so not to lose his self-respect."

This was an important reason for my feeling aggrieved. I felt that, if local people could dare openly accuse me, why could not they poison the king's ears secretly?"

The Raja sahib behaved with me normally. On a certain

occasion, he said in the presence of others, "Sridhar babu is a very honest and efficient officer." But I felt anxious. Anything might happen any time.

I was comfortably off in Boud. The price of commodities was very low. At times one rupee could buy thirty-two *tamlis* of rice, which was more than a maund. Besides, the rice was fine and clean. Similarly, twenty-five *tamlis* of green gram cost only one rupee, one *tamli* of oil, six *annas*; one *tamli* of clarified butter sold at one rupee or even less than that. Three to four outsiders were fed at my house every day. The person who did the dishes, the persons who fetched water, the boy who pulled the *punkha* at office, the person who brought grass for the horse — many like these took their meals at my residence. I had employed a cook. But I never thought that I was wasting money by feeding all these people. The two women who fetched water in pitchers from the river Mahanadi every day, received two annas for a month. The wage for fetching two pitchers of water from the Mahanadi, which lay half a kilometer away, every day during the summer, was only two annas per month. The man who brought grass for the horse took only two rupees per month. Very often, vegetables were bought from the garden of the state. About two rupees were spent on this. A seer of large tomatoes cost two paise in the market. Eatables were very cheap. Opportunities for spending on luxury were few. There were no cinema houses or theatres. One had to spend only on food and clothes. Every month, I sent about forty rupees to my father. All the same, I felt unhappy and restless. It was not possible to exchange small talk, open my heart to anyone or to establish social contact with anyone except the dewan, Udayakar Mishra and about ten other persons. I did not like the way the local people talked, their language, manners and behaviour. My relationship with them was confined only to dealing with them

officially. I considered myself an exile in a lonely island. I believe that others also felt like I did. Batakrishna babu, Udayakar Mishra, Radhanath Mishra and others got transferred to other places.

In the sphere of work, my resentment deepened on account of the king's attitude. I thought that what I had heard against the king from Chakradhar Pattanaik, Nilakantha Mishra and others might be true. I wanted to spend a few days visiting Puri, Cuttack etc. and I asked for leave of absence for a month.

The way the Raja sahib granted my leave application almost amounted to rejecting it. One month's leave of absence was sanctioned. But I was to enjoy that leave only when the state would not need my services urgently. A strange order! I did not find an opportunity to take leave for about three months. Finally, I took ten days' casual leave and received permission to leave the state. I would not be relieved of all my duties during my absence. The sub-inspector of schools would attend to only routine work during my absence. I left for Puri taking my family with me.

While there, Desarathi Pattanaik of Olasingh sent me a message through a man saying that he wanted me to take over as the headmaster of his school. He would pay me a salary of one hundred and twenty rupees a month. In the meanwhile, I had sent a telegram to Boud requesting the king to extend my leave up to one month. After two days, a wire arrived: "Leave cannot be extended." My resentment boiled over. I sent a telegram: "My resignation may be accepted."

From the Frying Pan to the Fire

I am an intensely emotional person. I get worked up by trivial matters and do something rash. As a result, I always suffer. Though my actions have hurt me on many occasions, I have not been able to give up this habit. Even in my old age I am reaping the

consequences of my rash actions.

I committed a grave mistake by sending the letter of my resignation. In *Hitopadesh*, though the deer had its ear bitten off by the lion, it again went to the lion, duped by the jackal, and lost its life. I often acted like that foolish deer. Forgetting my earlier bitter experience, which I had had teaching at an aided school for six or seven years, I allowed myself to get carried away, and agreed to return there, leaving my salaried job in Boud. It did not occur to me then that, I was jumping from the frying pan into the fire.

Back in Olasingh

Before leaving Boud I had been deputed to act as the superintendent of minor school scholarship examination. A parcel of question papers was mailed to my Boud address from the Bihar-Orissa examination Board. Instead of giving the parcel to the Raja sahib, the sub post-master redirected it to the Puri address that I had left at the post office. I received a telegram from the Raja sahib saying, "The scholarship examination is approaching. Forward the parcel of question papers sent to your address without delay." I sent a reply: "Send a person authorized by you. I shall get the parcel from the post office and give it to him."

Had I gone to Boud with the parcel, I could have reached there before the day of the examination. But I was afraid of the treatment I might receive there. I had not handed over the charges at the time of leaving Boud, as instructed by the king. Secondly, I had no evidence that my resignation had been accepted. Under these circumstances it would have been very easy on the part of the king to have detained me in Boud, bring charges against me and punish me. So I sent a telegram as mentioned earlier, instead of going to Boud personally. I waited at Puri for a couple of days and then went to Olasingh. The parcel returned to the sender, that

is, Bihar-Orissa Examination Board. Later, I learnt that the examination schedule was upset and the state had incurred unnecessary expenditure on account of this. After this incident, when I requested the state to pay me my provident fund money, my request was not granted. As a result, I lost around three hundred rupees.

In the past, I had been appointed as the assistant headmaster at Olasingh high school. After about four years I joined the same school as its head master.

First, I went to my village. Earlier, during my stay in Boud, I had sent to my father around a hundred rupees in two or three installments. My father had spent that money on buying *macadami* rights. No sooner did I reach home than my father gave me that great news and expressed his eagerness to register those farmlands immediately, but, when my father wanted me to give him five hundred rupees, I felt very upset. I had only about fifty rupees. I deposited five rupees in the name of my daughter every month. In this way, I had saved around a hundred rupees. My father said, 'You came home after such a long absence. I thought that you would have brought at least a thousand rupees. It won't do if you don't give five hundred rupees more.' I said that I earned around one thousand rupees in a year. Out of this, I had sent around five hundred rupees to him every year after meeting my own expenses there. Where would I get more money from? First he denied that he had received so much money. When I produced the money-order receipts showing that he had received more than two thousand rupees during the last four years, he said, "May be so. After all I have spent all the money to meet household expences. Now arrange money from somewhere". What he said was true to a great extent. He had purchased a few plots of land after meeting all household expenses. So, I came to Olasingh, borrowed six

hundred rupees from Dasarathi babu and went home. The *makadami* farmlands were registered.

I withdrew all the money I had deposited in my daughters name, and saving as much as practicable from my salary, I returned what I had borrowed from Dasarathi babu. He did not agree to accept any interest from me.

It was time for sending the roll numbers of students and their examination fees to the University after the test examination was held in 1934. There were twelve students in the eleventh class. Out of them, only four or five stood a chance of getting through the examination. It was decided to send up eight students, after consulting the teachers. That day, I was in a hurry to go home during the recess. As some people said that an earthquake had occurred, I rushed home. At home, I also learnt that an earthquake had taken place. But I could not notice any signs of destruction anywhere. All I had experienced was only a slight tremor. It might have been caused on account of either an earthquake or mental strain.

The news that the same day Bihar was struck by a terrible earthquake, which took thousands of lives, arrived shortly afterwards. The same year, the annual matriculation examination got cancelled on account of this earthquake. One examination was conducted instead of two, according to instructions sent by Patna University. We now got an opportunity to send the names those students who had been chosen earlier. The results came out. Three students out of four from our school passed. The only consolation was that the results of some other students were under consideration. The news that two more students passed came after a month. I thought that five students passing out of twelve was not at all a bad result. It was a matter of surprise that, towards the end of the year, the following message came: An examinee of

your school, Lakshman Satrusal has passed, but he has not been placed in any division." He was the only student who had passed in this way in the entire university. This student improved his prospects and rose to become the a Deputy Superintendent of Police.

The financial condition of the school had improved. But the management of its finances suffered from many irregularities. I was kept in the dark regarding the income and expenditure of the school. Some teachers were Dasarathi babu's kinsmen and they regarded the school as their personal property and practically ignored me. I was used as a rubber stamp. Dasarathi babu did not pay any attention to my complaints. Swami Bichitrananda Das was the president of this school. He talked to me and Dasarathi babu and then said to me, "The school is running smoothly. You are getting your salary. It would be better if you do not interfere in anything". I said, "I don't want to be a headmaster in name only." I tendered my resignation and came back home.

I spent only a year at Olasingh high school. I paid dearly for my thoughtless action. I realised how a man suffers if he does not have any savings at hand.

Banapur High School

Dasarathi babu arranged for me to travel home with my family in his motor car. At home, there were my parents, my brother, his wife and his three children. When my family joined them we became a family of ten. I had nothing to say or do about the management of the household. My pockets were empty. I could not provide my children with food and other things they badly needed. My father said, "What shall I do? How can I support so many persons." I was never praised for having repaid all the loans in a year, and for sending some money home. I also blamed myself.

My younger brother received a stipend of nine rupees as a primary schoolteacher. To try to survive on this amount was like trying to sweeten an ocean with a conch-shell-full of syrup. I found that I had no option but to look for a salaried job. But salaried jobs were not plentifully available. So I had to wait.

After I had spent about eight to ten days at home, a teacher called Charan Das came to our house bearing a letter from Pundit Godavarisha Mishra. The letter said, "Our school is modelled on Satyabadi High School. Trained graduate teachers will be appointed headmasters here on a rotational basis. There will be a difference of only five rupees between salary of the headmaster and that of the assistant headmaster. There are plans to get the lives of all the teachers insured. I am keen on having you as a co-worker. You will receive seventy rupees as your salary. You will serve as the temporary headmaster till the person who is appointed to the post arrives. It would be nice if you could join immediately."

I was desperately groping in the dark. I could not bring myself to ask my father why there was so much scarcity at home and how the money sent by me had been spent. I deemed it a sin to doubt what he said. I took it for granted that he was absolutely free to spend the income of his son in any way he liked. Besides, as I was the eldest son, I regarded it my duty to fulfill his every wish.

How could I not take a path which opened itself up for me? Actually, it was not that I decided to go to Banapur pursuing an ideal. My main purpose was to get out of my present plight. If I could do something for the country in the process, that was an extra thing. My first goal was to satisfy the hunger raging in the belly.

I came to Banapur riding a bicycle and carrying a small suitcase. I had accepted an inferior position and received thirty rupees less than what I was getting in Boud. At Olasingh, my

salary was a hundred and twenty rupees. At Banapur, I would receive only seventy rupees. One high school, two minor schools and around seventy schools belonging to other categories were under my care and two sub-inspectors of schools reported to me in Boud. Only the dewan and one king were above me. At Olasingh, in reality, I was subordinate to several persons. Here, at Banapur, Godavarisha babu and another headmaster would be above me; besides them, I didn't know how many other persons I would have to kowtow to. Poverty spoils one's character. Man is compelled to put up with a lot of humiliation when he lives in straitened circumstances.

That year, Banapur High School had become a full-fledged school. It had four classes - from the eighth to the eleventh. The records of the school were not in order. As the school did not receive any government aid, attention was not paid to this aspect of running the school. It became my main work to sort out the records and arrange them properly.

There was a minor school in the village. The distance between the high school and minor school was about one mile. Yet the hostel that was built for the minor school with partial assistance from the District Board stood in the compound of the high school. Godavarisha babu wanted that the minor school should be merged with into the high school. But some influential people of the village were against the idea. Godavarisha babu was the secretary of the schools. But he could not bring about this merger against the wishes of these people. Besides, departmental approval was necessary for such a move. The local tahsildar, Sudhakar Pattanaik, and the inspector of schools, Sachi Ray, worked to undermine the plan to merge the two schools.

Either Sachi Ray or the Director of Schools, Faux sahib, once came to inspect the school. After this, I took leave of absence and

went home to make arrangements for bringing my family and my belongings over to Banapur. I had taken only three to four days of leave; but I had to stay back for a few more days. I sent a leave application. I returned to Banapur after finishing my work at home. Unfortunately, my leave application had not reached the school. Godavarisha babu got the impression that I was a rolling stone, who had joined the school for only a few days and that I had left as I did not like job. So he had brought another headmaster. His name was Shyamsundar Tarasia. He had passed B.A., B.T. and B.L. After a few days, he too left the school and practised law in Berhampur.

In fact, the few days I had spent at Banapur made me like the place. Living here was far more convenient than it was at Olasingh. The railway station nearest to Olasingh is Tapang, which is about five miles away from the school. Balugaon, the railway station nearest to Banapur lies at a distance of about four miles. Banapur is better than Olasingh in many other respects. River Shalia flowing near Banapur and the hills surrounding presents a lovely sight. Balugaon lies on the shore of the Chilka lake. The rough hard terrain of Olasingh can never be compared with the fertile green paddy fields of Balugaon. Banapur might pass for a small town. Unlike Olasingh, it boasted a tahsil office and a police station. The Bhagawati temple and the Daksha Prajapati temple at Banapur and the paltan field at Hantuad remind one of the ancient glory of Orissa and the famous *Paika* rebellion. During my stay at Olasingh we used to buy provisions from the *haat* at Ranpur or Begunia once every week; but there was a daily market in Banapur. The most important thing was that, here, fish from Chilka was plentifully available at affordable prices. Two seers of small fish sold at about six *annas*, and, two seers of *haliakheda* (bagda) prawn sold at eight *annas*; the price of half a seer of cow's milk cost six

annas, goat's milk sold at two *annas*; for half a seer; one could buy a cart-load of firewood at eight to ten *annas*. Above all, the green gram pulses and hill-tract brinjals produced here had a delicious taste. On the whole, one had the best of both the worlds – a town and a village – at Banapur. One could support oneself spending with about twenty rupees and one's family on about forty rupees. When I first came here, I stayed in the hostel for a few days. I went home during the summer vacation. During this vacation a terrible misfortune befell me.

My son was then around two and half years old. But he was so healthy that he could be mistaken for a five year old child. Suddenly, the base of his ear got swollen and he came down with fever. At that time, Doctor Radhacharan Panda had been posted at the Kakatpur hospital. He examined the child, diagnosed his illness as mumps and gave him medicine. I had read a few books on homoeopathy. I suspected that the child was suffering from diphtheria. But the doctor said, "Mumps has broken out at such and such village. This is an infectious disease and, it affects children in particular. Cases of diphtheria have never been come across in Orissa. How can someone here have an attack of diphtheria?"

Doctor Radhacharan Panda was an intimate friend of mine. I accepted his advice; as the child did not show any signs of recovery, he remained present at my house all day the next day and attended to the child. Hearing the child cry at about two o'clock at night, he woke us up. Examining the child, he asked us to wash him with warm water and instructed us to fetch *antiflogestine* from another's house. A jackal went on howling at the door of the backyard towards the end of the night.

The child was given a warm water bath. *Alandaye of antiflogestine* was put just early in the morning. But he breathed

his last in my lap around eight o' clock in the morning. Radhacharan Panda left, weeping. My grief and my wife's knew no bounds. The death of the child devastated me. I felt too weak to walk for a few days. Since the death of the child, I would hear the sound of someone knocking at the window of my bedroom every night repeatedly. This came to a stop after the funereal rites were performed.

I returned to Banapur. I wanted to bring my family over there. Godavarisha babu was getting a few rooms constructed to provide accommodation to the teachers. However, the construction work was unfinished. I stayed with my family in a rented house at Tulasideipur for a few days. The village lay close to the school, which was only fifteen minutes walk from there. In time, the rooms got constructed. I, Nilamani Mishra and Bamanacharan Das were given two rooms each. A part of the veranda was used as the kitchen.

Inspecting the high school and the minor school, the director Faux sahib decided that these two schools would not be merged. A playground would be built for the minor school and the District Board road that ran through the school and the hostel would be diverted. After this decision was taken, class four was opened in the campus of the high school and opening one class every year. Four more classes were added to the high school. In the meanwhile, it was decided to appoint a Tamil gentleman, B. Ranganathan, who had done M.A.B.T., as the headmaster. After the death of Godavarisha babu, he left Banapur, and worked as the English expert in the Board of Secondary Education. At present, he lives in Cuttack with his family.

Sri Biswanath Satapathy was another teacher of the school. He had passed I.A and was the headmaster of the minor school. Later, he joined the high school and Bamana babu became the

headmaster of the miner school. Both he and Bamana babu enjoyed the full confidence of Godavarisha babu. Biswanath babu had developed some new theories about Oriya language. When Sri Shyama Chandra Tripathy succeeded Dippie sahib as D.P.I., Biswanath babu was appointed as a member of Oriya board of Patna University. Question-setters and examiners for matriculation and Cambridge examinations were appointed on the recommendation of Biswanath babu. One day, even the inspector of schools opined that Oriya teachers could learn many things from him about how to teach. Some highschool teachers in Orissa went over to him and received his advice and brought letters of appreciation from him.

One day, while I was taking a class, he came and sat in it and expressed his views. I wrote a complaint against his interference in my work. The inspector of schools wrote back saying, "What I had said about Biswanath babu's research does not mean that he will inspect classes taken by senior teachers." I could never develop a sincere rapport with him on account of this incident and some other reasons.

Biswanath babu had become an important person in that area. He enjoyed a lot of clout in Banapur as a member of the Khurda Land Mortgage Bank and a trustee of the Bhagawati temple and used his influence to decide village disputes. Ranganathan dared not ignore him, and he always tried to keep him in good humour. After Godavarisha babu's death Biswanath babu had differences of opinion with the headmaster, Kalia Panigrahi, and had to leave the school. After leaving Banapur he served as a teacher for some time at Kharagpur Oriya High School. Then he spent his last days with his son, Shivanath Satapathy, who is a lecturer.

I do not remember the exact day when the Director H. Dippie sahib had come to inspect the school. At that time I was the

headmaster. The classes were being held in the mango grove in the morning. One trained graduate teacher, Durga Charan babu, was teaching history. The medium of instruction was English. When the teacher referred to A.D. the sahib asked the students to tell him what it meant. When none of the students could give the correct answer, he asked the teacher what 'A.D.' meant. The teacher said, "A.D. means, 'After the death of Jesus Christ.'" I was accompanying the sahib. He asked me to give the correct answer. I said, "'A.D.' is the abbreviation of Anno Domini. These two Latin words means 'In the year of our Lord.' Here our Lord refers to Jesus Christ." After the inspection was over, he took me aside and said, "It is not pronounced as 'Anno Domini'; but 'Anno Dominai'." Here I learnt that the correct pronunciation of "Domini" is "Dominai". Whitmore sahib, the principal of the Training College, used to say that we were unable to pronounce correctly words like 'sugar', 'bird', 'heard'. Now why should I bother if my pronunciation of 'Dominai' was incorrect?

One day, I was teaching geography in class ten. I never knew when Godavarisha babu had either sneaked into the class after I entered it or he was sitting with the students on the last bench before I came into the class room. I taught the students about the climate of Africa. When I came out of the class after the bell rang, I noticed him sitting on the last bench. An hour later, he wrote down his opinion on my teaching and sent it to me. He had pointed out a few errors: for instance, I should have compared the climate of Africa with that of India and showed the differences.

Godavarisha Mohapatra, a famous writer, spent most of his time either in the school or in the hostel. We called him *Mohapatre*. He belonged to the Kumarang sasana. He was a student of Nilakantha Das and Godavarisha Mishra at Satyabadi High School. When Satyabadi High School was turned into a National School

in 1921, he did not take his matriculation examination. He studied at the National School for a few days. He was more obedient to Nilakantha babu than to Godavarisha babu. These two leaders got together sometimes and at others opposed each other in the political sphere. Whenever Nilakantha babu went to Banapur, he always stayed in the residence of Godavarisha babu. He chewed a lot of *paan*. Leave alone taking *paan*, Godavarisha babu disliked even the person who took *paan*. I was a *paan*-addict. So I supplied *paan* to Nilakantha babu.

Around this time the *Niankhunta* edited by Godavarisha Mohapatra was being brought out. One of its issues featured a cartoon showing a fish having the face of Nilakantha babu on the cover. Under it was written in Sanskrit: ‘Oh Nilakantha; you who have assumed the shape of a fish, take away our fear.’ An article in the magazine gave a funny reason for Nilakantha babu’s extreme fondness for dishes made of fish and his determination to destroy the species. Someone placed this issue of *Niankhunta* before Nilakantha babu. As soon as he saw its cover, he flung it without even opening it, saying, “Godavarisha is completely spoilt. He is simply wasting his energy.”

Once, during Nilakantha babu’s stay in Banapur, questions relating to Oriya grammar came up during the exchange of small talk. He had written a grammar book, which had been approved as a textbook for teachers of classes four and five. I said, “In this book, you have described how grammar should be written. But what you have written at places must be incomprehensible even to many teachers.” Nilakantha babu asked, “Have you read it? I thought that nobody read it. This year, only five copies of it have been sold.” In fact, it was not easy for such a scholarly book to be popular.

Pundit Nilakantha Das

Many years after I had left Banapur, Pundit Banambar Acharya and I often called on Nilakantha babu at Nababharat press. One day, he served us fish curry with great enthusiasm. It seemed to me as if raw fish had simply been boiled in water. The fishy smell overwhelmed us. We only tasted a little of the curry and left it uneaten. But he helped himself to the same boiled fish relishing it greatly. According to him, deep fried fish lost all its savour. If its fishy smell was gone, what was the point of eating fish? After all, taste differs from person to person!

One day, while he was chatting with the two of us, the topic of religion came up. He got worked up, and said, "Religion, What is religion? Religion amounts to great self-deception. It is the shelter of the shelterless. A great pretension for self-satisfaction. Look, in all countries, in all ages, man simply wants to lead a happy life. A leader became a king by means of trickery, and led a luxurious life using the wealth belonging to others. Those who took shelter under the king and sang his glory also lived happily in a way. Those unfortunate fellows who suffered consoled themselves, saying 'This king or his followers are having a good time in this life, but after death, we will enjoy ourselves in heaven whereas they will be roasted in hell.' Making kings and other rich persons frightened in this way, some people enjoyed certain facilities. The priestly class has been created in all countries and all religions in this manner."

On hearing Nilakantha babu, who had written scholarly annotation of the *Gita*, mouthing Charvak's views, we felt shocked.

On another occasion, I and Banamali Mishra, who is now the editor of the proceedings of Orissa Legislative Assembly, were walking with Nilakantha babu from Nimachoudi to Balubazar. We entered Masjid lane. After covering a short distance,

Nilakantha babu, stopped and said, "It is Masjid lane. We can go to Navabharat press taking this lane." Then, looking at either side, he said, "Where have the houses of prostitutes gone? All these houses now seem to be owned by respectable families." On hearing that the government had shifted the prostitutes to a place away from the town, Nilakantha babu observed, "The government destroyed the country; there will always be a few debauches in a society; similarly, some women will always stray from the path of virtue. Keeping them in a place apart, our society had protected its purity. Now keeping these women in society will lead to debauchery in every house." On hearing such strange opinion, we kept quiet.

A few months before he breathed his last, I went to see him one day, accompanied by Binayak Mishra. Afterwards, Gouri Kumar Brahma and another person arrived. Nilakantha babu was then staying at the residence of his son-in-law. By that time he had lost his mobility, and his memory had almost failed. Two persons made him lie down in an armchair. He recognised us with a lot of difficulty. He talked to us for some time; but it had little to do with what we said to him. Perhaps he had no idea about what he was saying. We left after some time. What pathetic end for such a brilliant mind! Madhu Rao has rightly said:

The skills of a man,

One day fail him under the influence of Time.

Godavarisha Mohapatra was known as 'Niankhunta' in the areas around Banapur. It would be no exaggeration to say that he was a born poet. While studying at the minor school, he had written a small book called *Banapur* at the age of twelve or thirteen. He has written poems and stories without number. He himself wrote almost everything that was published in the *Niankhunta*. Many must have read the poems published in it. The way he presented a

trivial incident in comic and satirical language was with out a parallel. He once he wrote a poem on the occasion of the prize giving ceremony of Banapur High School. I quote a line from it below:

*Goddess Vani, come, sit on my shoulder not in my throat,
I shall take you around the state of Orissa.*

On hearing this song sung with the accompaniment of *dasakathia*, C.R. Reddy, Vice-Chancellor of the Andhra University who was presiding over the ceremony, was so enthralled that he awarded ten rupees to the singer. Mohapatra could write a poem on any subject instantly. He was also an unrivalled writer of short stories. Many wrote satirical poems imitating him, for example, the editor of the *Durmukha*, but it cannot be said that they ever equalled him.

He had learnt mesmerism from his guru, Godavarisha Mishra. Once or twice he surprised us by exhibiting the power of mesmerism. Mohapatre was very short-tempered man. One day, a poem titled, 'Nari O Mahanadi' (Woman and the Mahanadi) was published in the *Niankhunta*. Sarala Devi, who was a renowned writer of Orissa and a member of the Legislative Assembly at one time, threatened to file a defamation suit against him. He showed Binayak Mishra and me this poem and asked if there was any reference to Sarala Devi. We said that the poem could be misleading and contained words having double meaning. He got furious and shouted at us. Only after two or three days, he again became the 'Mohapatre' we knew.

Manabendra Nath Roy

Invited by Godavarisha babu, Manabendra Nath Roy, who was a co- worker of Lenin at one time and the proponent of Radical Humanism, came to Banapur with his wife. Delivering a lecture

to school students, he gave them usual pieces of advice. Accompanied by a few children, who carried black flags, a Congress worker named Shyamasundar Senapati created disturbance during his lecture at the public meeting held in the village. Roy's wife, a French lady, quietened Senapati down. The visit of Roy to Banapur must have been politically motivated, but we were not aware of this.

The 1937 Election

The teachers of our school did not participate directly in the election held in 1937. Only I went to Tangi polling centre as a polling agent of Godavarisha babu. At that time, a very unpleasant incident occurred at an election meeting held at Bhatapara, a hilly area. Most of the people of that area were *khandayats*, and they were opposed to Godavarisha babu. Yet arrangements had been made for Godavarisha babu to address a meeting there. The head pundit of the school, Narayan Mohapatra and I went there as spectators. While delivering his lecture, Godavarish babu compared council sessions to the game of tigers and goats and described people as 'goats.' Suddenly one person roared, "Look, this brahmin says that we are goats and that he is a tiger." Eight to ten people supported him. We feared that not only Godavarisha babu but we would also not return unharmed. The meeting ended in a pandemonium. The organisers of the meeting somehow brought Godavarisha babu from the meeting place to Banapur safely. That day, we saw an instance of how ignorant and wicked persons pick quarrels for no reason at all.

Anyway, Pundit Godavarisha won this election.

As the British government made India participate in the Second World War ignoring public opinion, all Congress ministers resigned. A council of ministers was constituted in Orissa under

the leadership of the king of Paralakhemundi, and Godavarisha babu joined that council of ministers.

I Leave Banapur

After Godavarisha babu became a minister and went to stay at Cuttack, the influence of his cronies increased in the high school and went to stay in local politics. Gradually, I came to be utterly ignored. The policy of the headmaster was to tilt the umbrella in the direction from which the rains fell; in other words, he supported whoever would make his position strong. One day, one teacher not only denounced something I had done, he also cast aspersion on my character. It was feared that, if the headmaster sided with me and said anything to that teacher, he would find himself in trouble. In a fit of rage, I resigned from my post immediately and stopped going to school.

At the time, the person who was the secretary of the school was a mere figurehead; people who were close to Godavarisha babu enjoyed real power. The teacher who had insulted me was one of them. So, in all likelihood, the secretary must have sought Godavarisha babu's opinion on the matter. He said to me, "Godavarisha babu wants you to withdraw your resignation letter." I said, "What remedy does he suggest for the grievances which led me to resign? Neither has Godavarisha babu written to me, nor has he sent any one talk to me. I cannot change my decision until he personally sends a message to me."

Finally, it was decided that I would go to Cuttack and talk to him.

Before I discussed the matter with him, I said, "I have not come to Godavarisha babu who is a minister. I have come to that Godavarish babu who had sent for me and had said how the school would be managed like a family." He said, "I have never looked

upon you all as my employees. I don't want that injustice should be done to anyone". Then I narrated everything to him. He opined, "The teacher who insulted you is in the habit of doing such things. Anyway, ignore this and work together." I suggested that, if this teacher admitted his fault in the public, I would forget and forgive."

Godavarisha babu said, "He will find admitting his fault or asking for forgiveness in that manner humiliating."

I said, "My feelings should receive as much consideration as his." After a lot of argument, I said, "He has been working with you since long. We came to know each other only a few years ago. So, naturally you are partial towards him. I have resigned. I won't take back my letter of resignation. Even if I go away, don't deprive me of your blessings." At last, Godavarisha babu sighed, "If you don't accept my request what course of action is open to me?"

Nobody was present during this conversation except Godavarisha babu's faithful servant, Gopinath. While climbing down the stairs, I heard Gopinath saying, "Why did you indulge him so much? He said big things and you heard him out silently?" Godavarisha babu said, "Did I lose my honour in doing so? He has been working with us for about six years. You should not mind what he said in a fit or anger."

I gave up my job at Banapur. Bishnu Sharma, in the *Panchatantra*, has said, "Lift the other foot only after planting one foot strongly." But I have always taken a salaried job and left it like this in a huff.

Many incidents occurred in my family life during the six years I spent at Banapur. I was blessed with another son in 1936. My first son had died the year before. I was blessed with another two sons in 1939 and 1942. All my three sons were born in Banapur.

While living in Banapur, one day I found that the cheek of

my daughter had swollen, and she was suffering from a mild fever. This put me in the mind of the son I had lost earlier. I took her to a doctor, who belonged to the old world, had deep faith in God and was a simple-hearted person. He said, "I am giving her a little iodine mixture; pray to God. What he wants will come to pass. A doctor is only a medium through which the lord works." When I asked him if my daughter had an attack of diptheria, his reply was: "May be, may be. I'm not an expert in that field."

I concluded in the light of my own experience that my daughter was down with diptheria. If proper treatment were not given to her in a day or two, she would certainly die. I left for Cuttack by train the same evening taking her with me.

If the present-day Cuttack is heaven, the Cuttack those days was hell. It is now easy to travel from the station into the town at night. Those days, one would not dare go alone even during the day. There were no rickshaws at the time, not to speak of taxis. I travelled to the station in a horse-drawn carriage. My purpose was to get someone to give her an anti-diptheria injection at a private clinic. Light was burning dimly on few lamp-posts along the road. I saw a house near Buxi Bazaar. It had a nameplate saying 'Dr. Managovinda Sahoo.' I entered his house with great hope, and showed him the child and requested him to give an anti-diptheria injection. But he was drunk at the time and his gait was unsteady. He took a look at the child's face, went in, brought something in a syringe and injected the child. I asked him what was in the syringe. He said, "Iodine." Stunned, I asked him why he had not given her an anti-diptheria injection. He exploded, "Are you a doctor! I have given the patient what is good for her. I am going to sleep. My compounder is sleeping close by; if you need anything, wake him up." He collected the cost of his injection and went to sleep. The compounder lay snoring. It seemed he too was drunk.

It was a lonely night; everything lay buried in deep darkness. Only a lantern was burning. What would I do? Where would I go? I had no option but to remain seated, keeping a watch on my child. Her condition appeared to worsen.

Soon it was four o'clock in the morning. A few horse-drawn carriages appeared on the road. Hiring a carriage, I went over to the residence of Doctor Atal Behari Acharya at Binod Behari. As I repeatedly knocked on the door, Acharya, who was wearing only a gamchha, opened the door, a little ball of molasses in hand. I told him about my plight. He consoled me, "She may be suffering from diptheria or she may not, but it would be wise to give her one anti-diptheria injection. If it is diptheria, the injection will save her; if it is not, it won't do her any harm."

His medical store, Swaraj Medical Hall, lay near the Chaudhury bazaar square. He gave me the key of the store and asked to me to boil water in the store with the help of the compounder, who lived at Manikaghosh bazaar. He said that he would quickly finish his morning ablutions, and he would go and give the injection. The injection was given before seven o'clock in the morning. Improvement was noticed in the child in half an hour's time. She sat up and smiled a little.

Fortunately, one of my colleagues had got a small room, where he gave tuition to a child. I went there. With the help of a medical student I got a specialist, Nrusinghacharan Samantasinghara, to examine my daughter. He confirmed that she was down with diptheria and made arrangements for admitting her into the hospital without further delay. The child was given a cabin in the contagious ward of the hospital before evening. The doctor said that I had to buy the injections. This injection was expensive; I calculated that the treatment would cost me not less than three hundred and fifty rupees. I again approached Dr Atal Behari Acharya for help. On

hearing that Godavarisha babu knew me, he assured to give me medicine on credit.

I had saved around three hundred rupees at home for a special purpose. A reliable servant of the school where Bamana babu worked came to Cuttack bringing this money. He stayed with me and through the good offices of Banchhanidhi Satpathy, headmaster of Ranihat minor school, arrangements were made for our boarding in the school hostel. A servant brought our meals every day. One had to walk through a cactus jungle to the school.

My daughter's condition improved after about fifteen days. I was informed that she would be discharged from the hospital after about ten days. I informed my wife of this. Earlier I had written to my father about this sad incident. But nobody had come to help me.

I had very little money at hand. My health gave away on account of the worries and sleepless nights. After a time, the doctors stopped giving injections to my daughter and said, "At times she suffers from a mild fever. We will keep a watch over her for another ten days." In spite of the unwillingness of the doctor to discharge her, I came back to Banapur with her.

It was around one o'clock at night when I reached home from the Balugaon station taking a bullock-cart. As soon as I knocked on the door, the sounds of lamentation came from the house. As I had arrived earlier than expected and without prior information, my wife got the impression that our daughter was no more. Anyway, she felt relieved on seeing her daughter alive.

Death of My Mother

I received a letter from my father saying that my mother was seriously ill. I went to see her. By the time I reached home, my mother's condition had become critical. Perhaps she was down

with cerebral malaria. One or two days after I had reached home, she breathed her last.

My younger brother's wife had died and had left behind a three months' old baby. I decided to bring this baby and his elder sister to Banapur. At that time, the girl was about nine years old.

Having performed the funeral rites, I went to Banapur with these two children. The motherless baby grew healthy and strong under proper care. I grew extremely fond of him. But when he was around two and half years, my father came and took him back home with him.

Murder of Bezelgette

Many children from Ranapur were studying at Banapur High School. The head pundit of the school, Sri Narayan Mohapatra, stayed inside Ranapur garh. Banapur had close contact with Ranapur. Ranapur garh was like a big village, but it was the capital of the kingdom. An important event took place in that otherwise unremarkable place. The political agent, Bezelgette sahib was beaten to death in board daylight by an angry mob. The incident created a sensation not only in Orissa, but also all over India. To murder a white man, that too an important royal agent, was no small matter.

The king was stunned by the incident. What action would he take against the people? In the evening, he announced that all the local people should leave the garh immediately as there was no knowing what the government soldiers would do to retaliate Bezelgette's murder.

The police inspector of Ranapur, Ramaranjan Mohanty, came and stayed at Banapur to investigate into the matter. But he failed to gather much information. He was a man of letters, and he had written many stories and essays, which were published in the *Mukura*.

Later, the Bezelgette murder case came up for trial. Two persons, Raghunath and Dibakar, were hanged. A few others were given jail sentences. Many suspects left Ranapur, and had gone into hiding in the Mogulbandi areas. In time, they were caught and punished. One kinsman of Narayan Mohapatra, Manamohan was sentenced for life. He was released after about fourteen years. Unexpectedly, the day he was released from jail, I chanced upon him in a train. By this time, his father had become penniless and his wife had left for her heavenly abode.

Buying a Plot of Land

I thought of settling down in Banapur. I used to send money to my father till he died, with which he had purchased land. Though I did not know the details of the land my father had bought, I knew that he had purchased about ten acres. Whenever any extra expenditure was made at home, I also bore that. Nobody ever helped me or showed me any sympathy whenever I found myself in distress. It was cruel on my father's part to take my nephew away from me alleging that I ill-treated him.

I did not feel the need to visit my ancestral home after my parents died. I thought my younger brother was able to support his family with whatever he earned from the farmlands. Those days, anyone who owned about five acres of farmland in a village could easily support his family. My younger brother also earned a little extra by giving lessons to children in the village. So he lived comfortably on his own. I was therefore convinced that my brother did not need any help from me. He also never asked me for any help.

This situation gave me an opportunity to buy a plot of land with the money I had saved from my salary. At that time, an acre of farmland cost around three hundred rupees. I managed to

purchase about eight acres of land. My share of the harvest enabled me to support my family. As I kept a few cows and goats, there was no need for me to buy milk. Thus, I did not have to spend much on household expenses. I also got a house constructed. It had mud walls and a thatched roof. When the Second World War broke out in 1939, I had a suspicion that kerosene would become a scarce commodity during this period. A tin of kerosene (about twelve seers) cost four rupees and fifty paise. I bought two tins of kerosene at that price. My family managed for three years with it anyhow.

I gave up my job at Banapur High School in 1942. Pundit Binayak Mishra had purchased a piece of land from me, constructed a house on it, and lived as my neighbour. This was a god-send. As a neighbour, he always stood by us through thick and thin. He had decided to settle permanently at Banapur. He also purchased more farmland. I also decided to follow his example. While in Boud, I had bought about eight *tolas* of gold jewellery for my wife. I sold these off and purchased farmland with the money. In this way, I came to own around fifteen acres of farmland at Banapur. At that time, my wife lived alone with our three children. A servant boy often lived with them. At times finding a servant in Banapur was difficult. I had requested my younger brother to come to Banapur and live with us. But he expressed his unwillingness saying that it was absolutely impossible on his part to leave the village.

Passing M.A.

Although I had deposited the fees for appearing in the M.A. examination when I was in Boud, I could not sit for it. I had tried to read for M.Ed. in order to obtain a master's degree. I could not succeed in that endeavour, either. I knew that some people had

passed M.A in Oriya from Calcutta University as external candidates. They included Lakshmi Narayan Sahu, Chintamani Acharya, Rajkishore Roy. At the time, Oriya was taught at the post-graduate level only in Calcutta University. I sent an application asking permission from the Calcutta University to appear at the M.A examination as an external candidate. I received the following reply: "The syndicate has considered your application, and instructs you to study for two years in the university. You cannot appear as an external candidate."

I read Oriya, Sanskrit and English books, during my leisure. I never read them with the purpose of taking any examination. In the mean time, in 1942, I came to know from newspapers that, that year, Patna University was making some arrangement for students to sit for M.A. examination in Orissa. If at least three candidates offered to take the examination, it would be held in Orissa. I tried to persuade some friends of mine to take this examination, but they expressed their unwillingness as they had not prepared themselves for it. Undeterred by all this, I sent in an application and the examination fees to Patna University.

The examination lay about five months ahead. Though it was doubtful whether the examination would be conducted, I collected a copy of the courses of study from the University and started making necessary preparations. I made arrangements for buying the books, which were not available, through the school library. I decided to sit for the examination if it would be conducted in Orissa

I decided to do this for one reason. Godavarisha Babu had assured me that graduate teachers would be appointed as headmasters on a rotation basis. But during the five years I spent there, I did not get any opportunity to be the headmaster. I remained in charge only for a few days. The headmaster of the school was

an M.A. Only the three teachers who had passed M.A.-Nilankantha babu, Godavarisha babu, Krupasindhu babu - were appointed as headmasters on a rotation basis. Since no teacher was an M.A. at Banapur High School, no one was considered qualified enough for the post of headmaster. I thought, if I passed M.A., I would certainly be appointed to the post of headmaster. But, later I found that I was utterly mistaken.

Anyway, I took leave for a few days, and went to Cuttack and worked hard to prepare myself for the M.A. examination.

It was August, 1942. Our examination was in progress. One morning, we learnt that the Congress had been declared illegal and that all Congress leaders including Mahatma Gandhi had got arrested. We felt worried even in the examination hall. Anyway, the examination over, I returned to Banapur.

The results came out on time. I was the only examinee taking the examination at the Cuttack centre. Sri Prahallad Pradhan had sat for this examination at another centre. He had passed *Kavyatirtha* and M.A. in Sanskrit before taking this examination. We both passed M.A. in Oriya and were placed in the second class. Prahallad babu and I stood first and second in the university respectively. I had thought that I would stick to Banapur and stop drifting down the stream of life. But man proposes, God disposes. I had to leave Banapur a few months after the M.A. results were published.

Iswarachandra Hota

About three years after I had joined Banapur High School, a renowned worker of Singhbhum joined us. His name was Iswarachandra Hota. The school met his expenses though he was not a regular teacher of the school. He was placed in charge of the extra-curricular activities of the school. Persuaded by him, a high-

quality loom was brought to the school and he himself wove clothes with its help. Some students also learnt weaving. Efforts were also made to raise leghorn hens. However, this effort was abandoned after about four years.

Perhaps he was a leader of the Oriya movement in Singhbhum. While staying there, Godavarisha babu had been impressed with his qualities and brought him over to Banapur. His son was studying at Banapura High School. I learnt that his son is now the headmaster of Khandamauda High School. After leaving Banapur, Iswarachandra Hota spent a few days in Singhbhum and then he took to sannyas. He adopted a new name, Swami Madhabanandatirth. Alas, he is no more.

Khandamauda High School

After leaving Banapur High School, I remained unemployed for some time. I had constructed a house in Banapur, which lay about two hundred yards away from the high school. So I had no fear of becoming homeless. Apart from this, the farmlands that I had bought there supplied rice on which my family could survive comfortably. My eldest son was around seven. He could study at a local school. But how would the expenses on other things be met? I had no alternative but to take up a job at some other place. But where?

I had never dreamt that I would join Khandamauda High School. One day, Iswarachandra Hota persuaded me saying, "We have set up a high school at Khandamauda. The school will not receive government approval if there is no trained Oriya graduate headmaster." I tried to decline the offer saying that my second son was ill. If I stayed in a distant place, who would take care of my children at Banapur? But he was adamant that I must go. He refused to listen to my excuses. He shouldered the responsibility

of looking after my ailing child. There was a hospital in Bahadagoda. So there would be no problem about availing myself of medical facilities. I thought to myself that, if I went to Khandamauda, I would be able to serve my country in a small way, while at the same time earning my livelihood. Taking my ailing child with me, I set out for Khandamauda, accompanied by Iswarachandra Hota.

We spent a night in Cuttack, and boarded the train from there the next day. It was war-time and the train was terribly overcrowded. It was difficult to get a seat in the carriage. Laying the child under a bench, we sat down on the floor, and reached Chakulia station traveling in this manner. A training school was situated there. Oriya Students reading there arranged for our boarding and lodging. Though they were Oriyas, they were being imparted training through Bangla. Here I found many instances of how Oriyas had lost their identity in Bihar. I found that many Oriyas at Khandamauda did not at all feel threatened by the war. But fighter-jets kept flying from an airport near Chakulia. These created a deafening noise. I was walking about, my arms around the child, in order to stop him from crying. An American soldier came and spoke to me. He advised me to cover the child well and said, "Otherwise he will surely die." My heart filled with hatred for the man for saying such ominous words. These would never have issued from the mouth of an Indian. As I was leaving that place thanking him for his advice out of either politeness or fear, he grabbed my hand and asked me, "Where do prostitutes live here?" I escaped from him saying that I was a traveller, not a local.

The next day, we covered some distance by bus. The bus ride was more painful than the journey by train. We sat huddled in that small bus, which set us down at our destination, where a bullock-

cart was waiting for us. The cart was not like the ones seen in our part of the country. Its wheels were small and it was pulled by a buffalo. This cart rolled along the muddy road smoothly. We reached Khandamauda School about two hours later.

A low thatched house occupying an area of around one hundred square feet had been arranged for me. Iswarachandra Hota, a few local Oriya leaders and three teachers ate together at meal times. The meal comprised fine sun-dried rice, red gram dal mixed with tomatoes and a little vegetable soup.

The school was situated in the middle of a large field. It was run in a few rooms having thatched roofs and two rooms having tiled roofs; all rooms could not have tiled roofs on account of scarcity of funds. I thought that I had again jumped from the frying pan into the fire.

Iswarachandra Hota set about arranging for the treatment of my child. He brought homoeopathic medicine from somewhere. He got biscuits for him from a distant place. I learnt that the price of one tender coconut was eight *annas* and one piece of biscuit cost one *anna*, which was, four times what these cost in Cuttack. We had puffed rice and chillies for breakfast. Puffed rice was quite expensive, too.

I had no option but to work under these circumstances. Observing the local situation, I found that all the residents of the nearby areas were Oriyas; but the medium of instruction was Bangla in quite a few *pathsalas* in the village. As a whole, as one tills one's umbrella in the direction from which the rains fall, the young opted for Bangla, but the old were anxious to keep Oriya language and culture alive anyhow. This Oriya-Bengali conflict led to differences of opinion even between fathers and sons in some families.

Khandamauda and Bahadagoda

Though I had a strong desire to visit the areas nearby, I could not do so leaving my ailing child alone. From whatever information I gathered, I learnt that Bahadagoda was a place of some importance, where a police station, a hospital, a post office and other offices were located. There was also a high school, where both Oriyas and Bengalis studied. At the beginning, the managing committee of the school had an equal number of Bengalis and Oriyas. But gradually the influence of Bengalis increased in the managing committee. Oriya teachers were thrown out of the school under all kinds of pretexts. Students who wanted to study Oriya were not admitted. Only those who signed a bond saying that they would study Bangla instead of Oriya were taken. Many Oriya students signed this contract and got admitted into the school.

Left with no other alternative, a few Oriyas had set up the high school at Khandamauda. As a result, Khandamauda High School and Bahadagoda High School got locked in a conflict.

The condition of the school was miserable. The teachers received a paltry amount as salary on account of scarcity of funds. Even this was not paid regularly. Some brahmin teachers earned a little by performing priestly tasks. I did not want to exercise any authority over the teachers. I had to turn a blind eye to their apathy.

The standard of the students was far below the average. Those who had been learning Bangla since childhood did not know how to write the Oriya alphabet even though they were studying in class ten. How would they write their matriculation examination using the Oriya script? I made these students read Oriya *Barnabodha* as well as practise Oriya handwriting.

Almost every week, Bahadagoda School brought some allegations against Khandamauda School regarding the violation of the education code. One Deputy Inspector of schools came to

investigate the matter. He was an Oriya. He consulted me and reported in favour of Khandamauda School.

Realising that I lived in straitened circumstances and difficulties, Iswarachandra Hota arranged for the repair of one *pucca* room of a rich man's house, which lay a little distance away from the school. He also arranged for the medicine and diet of my child. In fact, he spent more money on me than the amount he had promised to give me as my salary. In spite of all these, I felt terribly restless. In the meanwhile, we received information that the school would be recognised by the authorities. I requested Iswarachandra Hota to let me return to Banapur. But he was determined to keep me for a few more days.

I decided to act according to the following principle: "One should always try to safeguard one's own self." Finally, it was decided that I would leave for Banapur and would come back to Khandamauda after my child recovered from his illness.

As it was impossible on my part to travel alone by train with the child, one person accompanied me up to Kharagpur. He went back, leaving me in the waiting room at Kharagpur railway station.

I worried about how I would buy a ticket and board the train with a child in tow in a crowded station. A young man, who was in railway uniform, came up and prostrated himself at my feet. I asked him who he was. I was surprised when I learnt that he was the adopted son of a Telugu railway employee, who worked as a signalman at the Balugaon station. He had given up his studies after being detained in class eight for two years in Banapur High School. After doing petty jobs for some time, he was appointed as a railway guard because he was prepared to serve in the defence department. His salary was more than three hundred rupees.

He made sure that I was absolutely comfortable. I stayed in the first class waiting room and took meals from the canteen. He

brought oranges and biscuits for my child. He also bought a ticket for me and helped me board the train. In return for all the help he rendered me, I had to carry one box of clothes for his father, who was working at the Balugaon station. I paid for my ticket and my meals.

I reached home. I found that the price of commodities had soared during the last three months. I had not been able to save a single penny during my stay at Khandamauda. All the same, I felt quite relieved that I had come back home.

I never met Hota after this.

Hariharapur Academy

Some days after I had returned to Banapur, I learnt that a letter written by Dewan Bahadur Srikrishna Mohapatra had been sent to me at the Banapur High School address. I went to the high school and asked the headmaster and some other teachers about it. But all of them said that they had seen no such letter. How could there be smoke without fire? A letter had surely come and it was kept concealed for some reason. I arrived at the above-mentioned conclusion and wrote to the Dewan Bahadur saying, "I came to know from some sources that you had written a letter to me, but I have not received it. If you had really done so, I'll feel obliged if you would kindly let me know of its contents."

I received the following reply: "As I did not know your present address, I had sent it to Banapur High School. I have an important work with you. Come and meet me before evening on such and such day in Cuttack."

Who did not know the Dewan Bahadur in Orissa? As a police official he had successfully suppressed terrorists in Bengal and had received the title '*Bahadur*,'- the brave one', besides many other medals. I had learnt that, at the time of the visit of the Emperor

George V to India in 1911, he was his only Indian attendant. People were mortally afraid of him. After retiring as the superintendent of police, he was living in Cuttack and, at times, he visited his native village, Chatara in Jagatsingpur. As the Second World War was in progress at the time, he was also working in the national war front. I reached Cuttack, feeling very nervous, for I was going to meet an ex-police officer who was considered to be a crook and was opposed to nationalism.

When I reached his residence at Bakharabad on the appointed day, I found him waiting for me sitting on the veranda. As soon as he saw me, he came down the veranda, hugged me and took me in as if I was a dear friend who was known to him for years.

After the exchange of pleasantries, he proposed, "I want you to join as the headmaster of our high school. You will be given a hundred rupees as salary, and free accommodation". He laughed, saying that he knew how to force me in case I disagreed. Saying this, he went inside. Sitting there I thought of some of my friends, who had served there as headmasters earlier and had got dismissed. I could not imagine that they could have committed any serious blunder. What was the guarantee that I would not be sacked after a few days? On second thoughts, I reminded myself that I was without employment, and my three children were at school. My younger brother had refused to come to Banapur and look after my family. Under these circumstances, why should not I accept this offer and join the school at Jagatsingpur, like a drowning man clutching at a snake?

The Dewan Bahadur came back after ten minutes and again asked, "What did you decide?" I replied, laughing, "Have you really waited for my reply? I will do as you say." He hugged me again and asked me to come back to Cuttack after making necessary arrangements for my family at Banapur.

I went back to Cuttack after a week. The Dewan Bahadur and I went to Jagatsingpur by bus. The headmaster, Surendranath Dey, had already been instructed to hand over charge to me. Having made arrangements for my accommodation, and introduced me to some gentlemen, the Dewan Bahadur returned to Cuttack.

As the ex-headmaster was unwilling to come to school, he handed over the charge to me through the clerk. After this, he stayed at Jagatsingpur in a rented house for a few days and met me a couple of times. Then he left Jagatsingpur with his family, which consisted of his newly-wed second wife, and his daughter from his first marriage, who was the same age as his second wife.

I looked for the proceedings of the school in order to find out in what way the headmasters who had been dismissed earlier were to blame. About eight headmasters had been sacked over the last two years. Most of them worked for about three months, and one had to leave after working for only ten days. One headmaster had lost his job for claiming that he was at the school at 10.30 A.M. on a day on which he was actually in Cuttack at 10 a.m. It was impossible to cover the distance between Jagatsingpur and Cuttack in half an hour. So he was found to be a liar.

The Dewan Bahadur applied strict administrative rules in the school. Some of his trusted men, who worked in the police department, sent him confidential reports on the school. He based his course of action on such reports. The real reason for dismissing Surendra Dey was that, though he had an unmarried daughter who was eighteen, he had married a girl who was around the same age as his daughter, and he had collected money from the guardians of a few students for meeting his wedding expenses.

I was instructed to send a daily report to the Dewan Bahadur on activities carried out at the school. He also sent a letter to me almost every day. He used to come once every week and supervised

the activities of the school, and his landed property. It is said, "Look before you leap". I performed on my duties as carefully as possible acting on this principle.

The results of the school examination, which was held one year after I became the headmaster, were satisfactory, and one student was placed in the first class. In the previous year, no student had been placed in the first class. Praise was lavished on me on account of this.

The residence which I had been allotted lay on the bank of a canal, and the area around it was overgrown with bushes. Mosquitoes were rampant. I was struck by malaria time and again; but it was not possible to neglect my duties. One day, I sent an application for long leave. After a day, the Dewan Bahadur arrived carrying medicines, oranges and fruits. He consoled me saying that, once I get used to the climate of the place, I would not suffer from attacks of fever. The very same night I came down with a fever. I had been instructed to meet him at seven in the morning the next day. As I was suffering from fever, I could not reach on time and got delayed by fifteen minutes. He said, "I have been waiting for you so long, don't you have a watch? A person, who is not punctual is not a human being". I felt angry and blurted out, "It is impossible to work with a person who does not care for others' conveniences and inconveniences. You don't approve of my leave application. I have to work during school hours and beyond". I don't know why, but his anger subsided.

It was rare to find a diligent worker like him. He did everything at the right time. He wanted that everyone should be diligent and punctual like him. But was it ever possible?

On one occasion, I thought I had come close to getting sacked. It was war-time and paper was scarce. Instruction was given to use the blank sides of used pieces of paper in offices. Instead of

throwing away used envelopes, one envelope was used ten times pasting economy slips on it. Thorns were used instead of pins. One day, I bought one ream of paper at Cuttack, and left instruction at the school that nobody except me should open it. It was kept in an *almira*. I thought I would take a sheet out of it in case of dire necessity and keep the rest sealed with wax. After about three months I needed a few sheets of paper and so went to open that packet. But it was not there in the *almira*. Later, after a lot of searching, only two to three quires of paper from that packet were found in another *almira*. Investigation revealed that, the school peon had brought the ream out of the *almira* and had kept it concealed in another *almira*. Then he sold the sheets of paper at four times their original price. It was found that a few pupils of the minor school had bought papers from him. I consulted the teachers about this matter. It was decided that the cost of the paper would be recovered from the peon. But how would it be done? Perhaps he was receiving a salary of only six rupees a month. It was impossible on his part to pay the amount at once. So, admitting his crime, he wrote that the amount would be recovered by deducting two rupees every month from his salary. Though I exchanged many letters with the Dewan Bahadur, I did not inform him of this incident of theft. Perhaps one of his spies might have given him this news. He wrote me a long letter, "Do you think I am a dummy? Why was such an important matter not brought to my notice? Why have the police not been informed for so long? Is the person who keeps a theft secret not guilty of abetment of a crime?"

I replied, "I did not think it proper to inform you of such a petty matter involving a peon stealing articles worth eight to ten rupees. The peon might have been dismissed, but no other person would have been available to replace him. Had the police been

informed of the matter, it would have brought bad name to the school, and so on."

I was afraid that I would be sacked on charge of abetment of the theft, and, if I were lucky, I would be spared the ordeal of going to jail. But nothing like that occurred. He himself went and investigated the matter. Everybody supported what I had done. He only pointed out, "I should have been informed about the matter immediately." The matter ended and I survived a dangerous situation. Perhaps, the real reason for sparing me was that it was not easy to get another headmaster in case I was sacked. At the time, it was very difficult to find a teacher; leave alone a trained teacher, who was an M.A.

Utkal University was set up in 1943. The same year I got appointed as an examiner for English in the matriculation examination for the first time. I received more than a hundred and fifty rupees by way of remuneration. Apart from the money, I was happy to get the examinership, for which I had been considered unsuitable when I was at Banapur and another person, who had passed I.A., had been found suitable.

It was not easy to understand the ways of the Dewan Bahadur. One heard many things about him. He had a son, whose name was Saradacharan Mohapatra. He passed away while reading for I.A. at Scottish Church College in Calcutta. It was said that he succumbed to hard work and illness. But it was rumoured that he committed suicide because coaxing information out of him, his father had nabbed and punished some revolutionaries in Calcutta. Another son of the Dewan Bahadur earned fame serving in the police department. He also died prematurely. The Dewan Bahadur had got a platform constructed at his village with the money which his son had saved, and enshrined the image of Krishna there.

The Dewan Bahadur and his kinsmen were wealthy

zamindars. Many of them had concubines. The children of these concubines were known as *golams*. If any member of the family passed away, his relations did not bear the dead body. These *golams* bore it to the cremation ground. One day, while talking about this to me, he said, "This is an inhuman practice. A dead body is regarded sacred in all religions. We do not touch it. What a dreadful situation!"

At the time the council of ministers was headed by the King of Paralā. One day, the Dewan showed me a letter from the Chief Minister, "I want to make you a leader of the National War Front for Orissa. You will get two hundred rupees as remuneration. If you agree, proper steps will be taken in this regard."

I said, "All right. You must agree. You will donate the money you will receive to the school." But the Dewan Bahadur said, "No, no, I cannot commit such a grave sin. If the persons whom I will send to war will die or get lost, I will commit a sin."

One day, I bitterly opposed the Dewan Bahadur on a trivial issue. At the time, co-education was not in vogue. A middle English school for girls was set up at Jagatsingpur. Actually, the governing body of the school consisted of the Dewan Bahadur and myself. I was the secretary and he was the president. Shyamachandra Tripathy, who was the D.P.I., was very enthusiastic about setting up a girls' school. Our school did not have its own building; there were only forty girls in our school. The Girls' M.E. School functioned in the building of the primary school of the local district board. The school received a grant amounting to only seventy rupees a month through the kindness of the D.P.I. Four teachers and one maidservant had to support themselves with this money. The headmaster was paid thirty-five rupees a month. In addition to this, money was needed for buying paper, chalk and to meet postal expenses. I bore these miscellaneous expenses. Teachers

could not get their salary for months.

All girl students were exempt from paying tuition fees. So the income of the school was nil.

We received the grant for six months. I asked to the headmaster to submit a list of their arrears and also to add one rupee towards contingency expenditure for every month. He did the same. I requested the Dewan Bahadur to sanction money referring to this list. He went through the list carefully. The contingency expenditure of one rupee for every month made him angry and he said, "What is this contingency? I am not a fool. I can see through your game." These words infuriated me. Unable to control myself, I said, "A guilty mind is always suspicious. Have you ever given money to buy paper, pen, and chalk? Who bears the expenses on those four to five letters, which are sent every month? You think that I want to misappropriate one rupee every month in the name of the school. It was not my duty to run the girls' Middle English school. I took this responsibility at your request. I do not want to have anything to do with that girls' school for a moment after seeing what your attitude towards me is." Saying this, I tendered my resignation immediately and took leave of him.

I came and sat in the office room of the school. My head was reeling. I could not think straight. On seeing my condition, the clerk of the school asked me if I were ill. I replied to him that I was feeling very sad. The clerk thought that I was close to the Dewan Bahadur. But seeing me sitting like this in the office room and getting this reply from me, he went to the Dewan Bahadur. The clerk was his trusted man. Some discussion must have taken place between the two. A little while later, he came back to me and asked me to go to the Dewan Bahadur. I sent a message by the same clerk, "I will not talk anything about the girls' school. He may discuss any other matter with me." The clerk might have

relayed my reply to him. As the dewan bahadur sent for me again, I went to him. We sat in silence for some time. Then the Dewan Bahadur said, breaking the silence, "I have grown old. A senior person has the right to say harsh things to a younger person. You are so incensed because I said something out of anger. How will the work be done if you behave like this?" I had softened a little. I said, "You are quite senior to me. If I commit any mistakes, correct me, boxing my ear, I won't complain. But I could not stand the insinuations you made." The matter came to an end in this way. But it was a matter of surprise that a stubborn person like the Dewan Bahadur softened and obliquely admitted his fault on that occasion.

There was only one Sanskrit teacher in the school. I did not know what academic degrees he had obtained. It seemed he loved to be flattered. Once, while exchanging small talk, I wanted him to explain to me the meaning of one *sloka* from *Abhijnana Shakuntalam*. But he told me that he had not read that book. I asked him to explain the meaning of a few *slokas* from *Meghadoota*, *Kiratarjunam*, *Mrichchakatikm* and other texts. He said that, as these books were not prescribed, he did not remember anything about them. Finally, he confessed that he had merely passed the Upadhaya examination.

He could sense that I considered him unsuitable for the post of a Sanskrit teacher. So he applied to other places without informing me. One day, he came to me and said, "I have got a job at Bhadrak. I will get thirty-five rupees as salary which is five rupees more than what I am getting here. I had not applied through you. I'll be obliged, if you won't disclose this matter. "

I assured him that I would relieve him. I relieved him, informed the dewan Bahadur of this, and immediately got another pundit, who had passed the Sahityacharya examination, appointed

in his place. This above-mentioned teacher did not stay in Bhadrak for long. Later, giving tuitions to students in Cuttack, he earned a lot of money, and was able to educate his sons.

The Dewan Bahadur Passes Away

The Dewan Bahadur owned vast property. He had differences of opinion with his sons, particularly with Nela babu (Shyamacharan Mohapatra) on matters relating to the division of property. One of his kinsmen, who was a highly placed royal official, acted as a mediator. But the Dewan Bahadur was not satisfied with his decisions.

While he was going through such a hard time, he took ill. One day, I wanted to go to Cuttack to see him. But many people dissuaded me, saying, "If you go, he would tell you, 'Am I dying that you have come to pay me your last respects?'" So I decided against going to see him.

Next day, we received news that he had passed away.

His son, Nelu babu said to me, "Our father is no more. He told me to look after the school. He had expressed the wish that you would help me in running the school."

At the time, it was rumoured that the Dewan Bahadur had willed that the entire income of Galua *mouza* to the school.

The meeting of the school committee was held after the obsequies were performed. Jagatsingpur was known as Hariharapur in the past. The British merchants had constructed a trade centre here. As the school was set up on the remains of that centre, it was named Hariharapur Academy. Later, it was named Srikrushna Academy to honour the memory its founder. Nelu babu became the secretary of the school. Sri Bhagirathi Mohapatra (Bhagu babu) became its president.

Nelu babu and his brothers declared at a meeting, "A rumour

has been spread that our father has willed some property to the school. We have not found any such will. Nevertheless, we have decided to donate a sum of a thousand rupees to the school in memory of our father." This news was published in the *Samaj*.

When the Dewan Bahadur was alive, Nelu babu had taken two thousand rupees from the school funds in order to supply articles to the school. But these articles were not purchased. In the meanwhile, an application had been sent to the government asking for a grant for the construction of schoolrooms. The government agreed to bear half of the expenditure and granted four thousand and five hundred rupees for this purpose. Nelu babu received the money from the treasury, but I had to wait for a long time to be informed about the treasury voucher number and the date on which he had received it. I had to include this amount in the income of the school.

At this time, Bhagu babu was staying in Delhi. If I remember rightly, he was then a member of the Constituent Assembly. I wrote a letter to him saying that this money was granted according to the estimate which had been prepared around ten years ago. Twice the amount would now be required for completing the same work. We should therefore apply for an additional grant. He advised me to do that. I got another estimate prepared by the S.D.O. of the public works department and made a fresh application to the government. The grant was doubled. But all these happened only on pen and paper. Actually, the money was not even deposited at the post office. Nelu babu had kept all the money with him. Who would guarantee that I would not be held responsible for an illegal action like this as I was the headmaster of the school? I felt terribly worried. Finally, I proposed at a meeting that the money could not be deposited in the post office passbook since the depositor's name in it had not been changed. I also said that the construction of the

house should be started soon and, as no experienced contractor was available here, the charge of construction should be given to Nelu babu. He should be given the money in advance. Then I took a receipt from him and showed that the money had been spent, and heaved a sigh of relief.

Nrusingha Charan Kanungo

Nrusingha Charan Kanungo was the headmaster of Dhenkanal high school. In 1948, it was decided to integrate the feudatory states with the state of Orissa. Many terrible things were said against the king of Dhenkanal. But the king liked Nrusingha babu very much. Before the state was merged with Orissa, the king bade good-bye to Nrusingha babu, giving him provident fund and a small pension. He lived in his village, which was near Jagatsinghpur.

Nrusingha babu was Bhagu babu's niece's husband. At the time, he lived in penury, for he had to provide financial support to his son or some other relative, who was studying in England. One day, Bhagu babu gave me a proposal, "We are going to upgrade the school to a college. Srikrushna Mohapatra did not relieve you to enable you to join as a lecturer at Ravenshaw College. He wanted to make you the principal after this high school became a college. We also want the same. Nrusingha babu is a suitable person. If he joins us, the school will make progress rapidly and it could be soon upgraded into a college. Then he would become the headmaster of the high school. Now he will be appointed as the additional headmaster with a salary of hundred rupees. You will remain responsible for the administration of the school; he will look after its academic affairs."

I objected to his proposal saying, "Though your proposal sounds good, it is not feasible. In the first place, the education

department will hold the headmaster responsible for whatever happens to the school. If Sri Kanungo works against my opinion, I will be compelled to take action, which is impossible. Secondly, if an additional headmaster is appointed and given charge of some work of the school, it will be proved that the present headmaster is not efficient. I know that Nrusingha babu is an experienced man; he has served as a headmaster for a long time, and is capable of running any high school. But, if the two of us work at one place dividing our duties, it may lead to the ruin of the school instead of enabling it to make rapid progress. This is exactly what had happened at Olasingh. It is said, 'One bad general is better than two good generals.'"

In spite of my expressing these reservations, Bhagu babu asked me to give his proposal a second thought. I talked to Nrusingha babu. I expressed my views and sought his opinion on them. He said, "I want a job which would give me a salary, at least for a few days. So I have agreed to Bhagu babu's proposal."

I discussed the matter with Bhagu babu in the evening. I told him clearly, "You want to appoint Nrusingha babu and he is also interested in getting the job. It would have been better if you had asked me to leave. There was no need to adopt such a round-about method of getting rid of me."

He said, "Have you committed any misdeed that we would dismiss you? Local people including the students are devoted to you. Such an act of injustice will create disturbance in the locality."

I thought that I had come here floating happily down the stream of life. But a strong wind was now sweeping me away. Again I would drift and find myself at some other place.

I said to Bhagu babu, "Your fear is absolutely baseless. No disturbance will be created or I will never come in your way."

"How is it possible?", he asked.

“I have decided to take long leave to benefit from a change of climate. You will appoint him as the headmaster- in- charge during my absence. After the period of my leave comes to an end, I shall send in my resignation. Then he will become the permanent headmaster.”

“You have saved me from a terrible dilemma,” saying this, Bhagu babu hugged me. I took leave for a few months. Nrusingha babu became the headmaster on a temporary basis. Though there was such differences of opinion among Bhagu babu, Nrusingha babu and myself, outsiders did not get a wind of it.

I lived at Jagatsingpur from 1943 to 1948. I survived for such a long time, coping with a difficult person like Srikrushna Mohapatra, and could win his trust.

At Korua High School

Before I took leave of Jagatsingpur high school, one teacher from Korua High School and another gentleman had come to Jagatsingpur to persuade Nrusingha babu to join as the headmaster of the high school in Korua. Nrusingha babu had asked them to wait for a while. They could sense that my going on leave was a pretext for my leaving the place for good. One morning, the two of them came to me and requested me to go to Korua. I had no idea about this place. But, in a way, they compelled me to accept their offer. I also agreed to remain there till the beginning of the summer vacation, without considering the pros and cons of my decision. Something is always better than nothing. What was the harm if I joined Korua High School for a few days rather than sit idle at home without a job?

Shortly afterwards, I set out for Korua. After travelling about twenty miles by bus, we arrived at Korua via Tendakuda.

Sri Shayamasundar Pattanaik, the local zamindar, was the

manager and patron of the school. But his zamindari had been abolished a few days before. He was living on the compensation money he had received from the government. Though his zamindari was gone, he continued to live in style. When he went to the river to take bath, he was borne there in a palanquin, and a barber carried his gamchha. He used to take opium. Once he bought opium worth hundreds of rupees, selling a few plots of land.

He was around sixty. He won everybody by his simplicity and his genial manners. He lavished his affection on me. At times he called me to his dilapidated *pucca* house to exchange small talk. I received help and co-operation from my colleagues at the school. On the whole, I faced no problems while working there. But Koura lay in the rural backwater; it lacked proper roads. To make matters worse, the nearest post office at Kalabuda lay about two miles away. The place seemed completely cut off from the civilized world. I spent a few months there enjoying myself.

A Turning Point in My Life

In the meanwhile, I had sent an application for the post of a lecturer at Utkal Christian College, Cuttack. Earlier, I had been selected by the Public Service Commission for the post of a lecturer and posted at Ravenshaw College. The then principal, Parija sahib had instructed to me to join at the earliest. But at that time I was working at Jagatsingpur High School. The Dewan Bahadur was not willing to relieve me. He created complications for me both directly and indirectly. I was appointed at Ravenshaw College for six months. My salary and emoluments as the headmaster came to about a hundred and fifty rupees. I had also been given free accommodation. But if I came to Cuttack, I would get only one hundred twenty-five rupees, out of which I would have to pay at least twenty rupees towards house-rent. What would be left after

supporting myself? Above all, I had to consider what I would do after six months? If I had joined Ravenshaw College, I would have had to resign from Jagatsingpur High School. So I had stuck to the apparently permanent post of headmaster at Jagatsingpur, instead of taking a chance by joining Ravenshaw College. So I turned down that offer, and Sri Jayakrushna Mishra was appointed in my place.

In the meanwhile, I had to leave the job which I had come to look upon as permanent. I thought my son would go to college after a year or two. Even if I received up to one hundred and fifty rupees from the high school, would it be possible to give my child a college education in Cuttack and support my family at Banapur? If I lived in Cuttack, my son would live with me and pursue his higher studies there. I sent an application to Utkal Christian College guided by these considerations.

I got an appointment letter from Utkal Christian College. The job I was offered carried a salary of one hundred twenty-five rupees and dearness allowance amounting to twenty rupees. There was now no problem about leaving Korua. Earlier I had promised to remain there till the beginning of the summer vacation. I rented a room with a veranda attached to it for cooking purposes, which lay about one and half a miles away from the college. The rent was twenty-five rupees per month. This was a turning point in my life.

Utkal Christian College

The Christian Education Board in Cuttack established this college in 1942. Many students were deprived of higher education for not getting a seat in Ravenshaw College, which was then the only college in Orissa. So, the setting up of this college brought golden opportunities to such students. At first, only the I.A. class

was opened here. Then the B.A. class was opened in 1944. When I joined the college in 1948, Oriya honours class had been opened. Earlier, two other lecturers in Oriya had been appointed, namely Sri Gourikumar Brahma and Pundit Banamber Acharya. I knew Brahma. He was my colleague at Banapur High School for a few days. Later, he passed M.A. in Oriya. But he could not find a job in a government college because he had been placed in the third division. After serving with Utkal Christian College for a few years, the University found him suitable to be a lecturer in a government college. He was selected by the Public Service Commission and remained in government service till his retirement.

I did not know Banambara Acharya personally. I only knew that he had passed the *Sahityacharya* examination from the Sanskrit college in Puri and had taught at a few *tois*. He had deciphered some ancient scriptures found at Keonjhar state by dint of perseverance and had published them. Recommended by the king of Keonjhar, he was appointed as a lecturer in this college at a salary of seventy-five rupees. But the university approved his appointment and instructed the college to give him one hundred and twenty-five rupees as salary and all other facilities enjoyed by lecturers. Though he had not crossed the threshold of a University, he became a college lecturer by virtue of his scholarship and perseverance. In this respect, he was like Pundit Binayak Mishra. In a few days, we grew close to each other.

Initially, I experienced difficulty in teaching at a college. In a school, a class usually consists of not more than forty students. The students at school are also very young. One can give attention to almost every student. It is easy to maintain discipline. But every class in this college consisted of one hundred and fifty or more students. Most of them were mature young men; some of them

were as old as I was. It was almost impossible to control them by losing one's temper or by warning them sternly when they created disturbance.

It took me some time to learn how to maintain discipline in a class. I also prepared myself thoroughly before taking a class. At the time, Sri Brajananda Mohanty was the principal of the college. He was a true Christian. He was revered by all lecturers. He kept a close watch on lecturers to make sure they did not neglect their duty. One day, he asked a written explanation from me because I was late in attending a staff meeting by only three minutes.

As I was a headmaster before I joined the college, he gave me more and more administrative work and was satisfied with my work. He tried to ensure that not a single paisa of the college was misspent. At times, he himself bore some of the expenses. Raybahadur Samuel Das was the president of the college governing body. He had retired after distinguishing himself as a Revenue Commissioner and the Chairman of the Public Service Commission. He was associated with many public service institutions. His aim was not only to follow the usual departmental rules and regulations, but also to enhance the moral status of the college. So lecturers felt very happy and contented. But all days do not pass alike. Brajananda babu took voluntary retirement from the college on account of ill health. Another lecturer, Smrutiranjana Mukherjee became the principal of the college, but he also fell ill and took leave.

The name of the college was changed to Christ College during this time and the name of Mission School, which was run by the Christian Education Board was also changed to Christ Collegiate School. There was an interesting reason for this change.

A commission was constituted under the leadership of Sarvapalli Radhakrishnan, to look into the university education

system in India. The commission included two or three members. As far as I can remember, Dr. Meghanad Saha and a lecturer at the university of California were its members. They came to our college and held a discussion with the principal and lecturers in the college office. The American member asked, "Why is the college called Utkal Christian College?" Radhakrishnan said, laughing, "Utkal is the ancient name of Orissa. You are a Christian and know quite well what a Christian is. As for college, we have visited so many colleges of India and this is no different from them." Now, it was felt that such a name might foster communal feelings. A meeting of the governing body was held in a couple of days, and the name of the college came to be changed.

The chairman of the commission summoned two lecturers from each college to ascertain the opinions of lecturers on university education. I and another lecturer called Quirian were sent to meet Radhakrishnan. Twenty lecturers in all met him. Each of us was allotted only two minutes.

The Christian Education Board appointed Prafulla Kumar Mohapatra as the principal of the college. We were told that he had got an M.A. degree in political science from Calcutta University and a Ph.D. from a University in America. He was a native of Berhampur in Ganjam district. He said that he was a professor at Allahabad University. But as my two sons had passed M.A. from Allahabad University, I knew many other things about him.

I disclosed the facts about the principal to many of my colleagues. He did not have Ph.D degree. What he had referred to as an 'incomplete Ph.D.' became a subject of jokes among the staff. He hatched many conspiracies against me. But he too had to leave the college. But, during his time, the college environment was disturbed. Perhaps nobody was interested in becoming a

temporary principal at Christ College. In the mean time, a non-Oriya Christian called K. Bhagat was appointed as the principal. I never knew anyone who was happy with his work.

Anyway, I retired from Christ College in 1968 after serving there for twenty years.

I had started my job as a minor-school headmaster in 1924 and I retired in 1968, after teaching for forty-four years. At the time of my retirement, I was drawing seven hundred and thirty rupees as my salary.

Writing Text Books

I wrote two books with the help of Narayan Mahapatra, the Sanskrit pundit of the school at Boud, and we got these corrected by Artaballabha Mohanty at the instance of our publisher, Students' Store. This book became very popular, and after a year, I received about eighty rupees as royalty. The two of us naturally felt very encouraged. The publisher requested us to write a grammar book for students of class six and seven. We worked hard for a year on writing this book and again got it edited by Arta babu. The Director of Bihar-Orissa Education Department approved this book. The amount of royalty we received also became larger. As a result, the two of us aroused the envy of a few teachers of that school. But we ignored this and got on with our work. We were entrusted with the task of writing a grammar book for matriculation students. The publisher encouraged us. We took a Bangla grammar book as our model while preparing the text. In the course of writing, the book grew very large. So the publisher advised us to make the book shorter. We did what he said. Now, who would edit the book? On seeing its size, Arta babu refused to revise it. So, we sought the help of Gopalchandra Praharaj. I showed him the draft and requested him to edit it. He said, "I am

busy collecting money for the *Encyclopedic Dictionary*. So I can't do anything without remuneration." The publisher agreed to this condition, and it was decided that he would be paid twenty-five rupees for each hour he would spend on revising it.

In the mean time, someone stole the manuscript I had kept in my trunk and I felt very worried on account of that. Anyway, the copy of the manuscript which had been given to Gopalchandra Praharaj came back after being revised. The publisher brought out the book and sent it to Patna University for approval. Fortunately, the University approved this book and we both came to be well-known all over Orissa as grammarians. Our income also increased. This book was used for about thirty years as a textbook at high school and college levels in Orissa. Many still use this book even after the nationalisation of textbooks, but we no longer receive any royalty.

After being appointed as a lecturer at Christ College, I tried to write a few textbooks. Radhanath's *Chilika*, *Darabar*, *Chandrbhaga*, Sishu Shankar's *Ushabhilasha*, Dinakrushna's *Rosakallala*, Abhimanyu's *Bidagdha Chintamani*, Bhaktacharan's *Mathuramangala* and many other books were prescribed as college textbooks. I edited them and wrote commentaries on them. Apart from this, I also wrote a book on figures of speech in Oriya. I edited an anthology titled *Nutana Sahitya Sangraha* (Anthology of New Literature) for students of class eight and a book of essays for college students with the help of Jayakrushna Mishra.

Though I lived in Cuttack, I remained to be in touch with Pundit Narayan Mahapatra. In 1950, the partners of Students' Store in Berhampur set up separate shops. As a result, Grantha Mandir, New Students' Store, Cuttack Students' Store, Das Brothers and such institutions came into existence in Cuttack. New Students' Store became the publisher of our *Laghu Byakarana*, *Madhya*

Byakarana and *Sarhasara Byakarana*, which had already been published. We both wrote three more grammar books for Grantha Mandir, in response to the request of its proprietor. Apart from these, we attempted to compile a new type of dictionary, called *Bibidhakosha*. As the book did not do well in the market, the publisher felt discouraged and asked us not to do any further work on the project. In the mean time, I had compiled an Oriya-English dictionary for Grantha Mandir, and two editions of it were brought out. This has now become a rare book.

Grantha Mandir entrusted me with the responsibility of translating into Oriya some well-known popular books in English and Sanskrit. Though the remuneration was negligible, I was able to write many a book on account of this. All these books were translated from English and Sanskrit.

I may note here that many English books were translated into different Indian languages under United States of Information Service. Late Golakabehari Dhal, Chintamani Mishra, Lala Nagendranath Ray and many other writers of Orissa have translated many books into Oriya. I also translated about six or seven books and received around eight thousand rupees by way of remuneration. At present, I am no longer engaged in translation activities.

Money as a Source of Evil

Shankaracharya offers us the following advice: "Always regard money as evil, for it never gives happiness." In fact, nothing can be truer than this. If a relationship is based on money, quarrels are bound to erupt. But life being what it is, it is simply impossible to manage without money.

Whatever money I had earned as my salary and from the sale of the textbooks on grammar between 1924 to 1934 I had sent to

my father after meeting the expenses of my family. My father had used this money for supporting the family as well as buying land. The meagre income of my younger brother had also been added to what I had sent him. In this way, he had purchased about twelve acres of land and a few *makadami* rights. When my parents died, my contact with my village almost came to an end and I did not send money regularly to my younger brother. Overtime, I purchased a few pieces of land at Banapur with a view to settling there permanently. I bought a residential plot measuring more than one acre and got rooms made of wattle and mud constructed there. This aroused the envy of some of my colleagues. The house was, so to say, built with the royalty I had received from the textbooks on grammar. The paddy the farmland yielded was enough to feed my family, and I could even sell some of it every year. When I left Banapur in 1942 and moved from one place to another, my family lived in the house I had built at Banapur and my children studied at the local school.

Gradually, I lost all contact with my native village. My brother and his family enjoyed all the income from the farmlands. I had gone to the village only once in 1950 and had brought a hundred rupees from a person through my younger brother as I had found myself in dire need. It was decided that this person would be given four *gunths* of land in return for this money.

Though I could not go to our village, my brother used to come to Banapur and to Jagatsingpur on several occasions. If ever I wanted to go to the village, he dissuaded me by talking about the inaccessible roads and other inconveniences associated with the place. In 1948, after I came to Cuttack, he visited me several times and in 1950, I made a trip to my village. At that time there was no bus service to my village. I travelled from Puri to my village riding a bullock cart going through a lot of difficulty and spending a lot

of money. But there I found myself a stranger in the eyes of the villagers. My brother took advantage of this situation and got many plots of land registered in his name. He purchased a few other plots of land in his name with the money I had sent to him. He mentioned in the document he had bought these pieces of land with his own money and nobody had any share in it. As I had never got this news and never complained, he easily got these registered in his own name. Later, this led to all manner of disputes. The village sarpanch wrote that the eldest son of Shyamacharan Das (it refers to me) had been missing for sixty years. Gangadhar Das (my younger brother) was paying all the taxes and so the plots of land should be registered in his name. He with the help of his four sons, hatched many conspiracies and finally registered all the plots of land in his name in the official records. If I had wanted, I could have fought for my rights, but I no longer had the energy or the willingness to do that. My brother is now no more.

I have fallen prey to many such conspiracies. Around 1944, an attempt was made to set up a spinning mill at Jagatpur near Cuttack. It was named Orissa Cotton Mills Limited. Pundit Godavarisha Mishra was the director of this company for some time. An agent of this company was a good friend of mine, and he hailed from a place near Jagatsingpur. He persuaded me into buying twenty-five shares, and, in the beginning, I had to give fifty rupees. Later, I gave the full value of the twenty-five shares, that is, two hundred and fifty rupees, over about six years. In the mean time, the balance sheet, which was presented in the public meeting of the company, revealed that the expenditure of the company exceeded its income, and it was impossible for the company to continue its operations. So I gave a proposal for breaking up the company. But it was not accepted, as most of the shareholders were opposed to it. About ten years after this incident, when I met

the registrar of the company and made enquiries, he said that the shares of the above-mentioned company were now worth nothing. The hard-earned money I had invested in it had gone down the drains.

In this way, I have got cheated again and again. Still I continue to trust human beings. Everyman in this world is eager to misappropriate someone else's possessions adopting some unholy method or the other. Mahatma Gandhi once said, "To save more wealth than one needs is one kind of theft." But the meaning of *necessity* differs from individual to individual. So everyone strives to accumulate more and more wealth. No one spares a thought for righteousness, or justice.

Some Earlier Incidents

When I lived in Boud, I once joined a *hakka* or a hunting party. A portion of the jungle was chosen for this purpose, and a few raised platforms were built in the middle of it. Hunters sat hiding themselves on these platforms, which were covered over with branches and leaves. Hundreds of people would advance, beating drums, and drive the animals towards these platforms, and, from the opposite side, hunters would aim their guns at the quarries. On that day, I sat on a platform, the Raja sahib sat on another, and one of his guests sat on yet another. As ill luck would have it, no animal ran towards the raised platform that day. Only a small young deer came running in. Raja sahib did not shoot at it. His guest shot at the deer but missed the target. All our endeavours were in vain.

On another day, the Raja sahib paid a visit to Cuttack. The dewan, Sri Batakrushna Mohanty, and I accompanied him. He stayed at a dak bungalow. Dinner was over by eleven o'clock, and we set out after midnight on a hunting expedition. Apart from me

and the dewan, two servants sat in the Raja sahib's motor car. The Raja sahib himself drove the car. The servants flashed torchlights on either side of the road. At first, I could not understand why they were doing so. The motor car did not make any noise. The car came to a stop after covering a distance of about four miles. The Raja sahib got off the car, gun in hand. The dewan and I followed suit. Two blue eyes glittered through the darkness when the torchlight fell on them. Raja sahib took aim and fired, but the animal disappeared in an instant. Raja sahib was upset that the bullet had missed its target. Bata babu was a *Vaishnav* and a follower of the principle of non-violence. He said, "I am with you. So you will never be able to hit your target." But after some time, the animal's eyes again shone in the dark. The Raja sahib once again fired his gun. The two eyes disappeared. The dewan remarked, "This time too you did not succeed." But the Raja sahib said that this time round the prey had been hit, and proceeded to look for it. The dewan, the two servants and I followed him against our wishes. Fear gripped our hearts. At last, we found a big antelope lying dead. The bullet had passed through its ear. The servants went to a village nearby and brought some people over, and all of them carried the antelope, laid it on another motor car, which followed us. We drove to the garh. By the time we reached home, it was three o'clock in the morning.

It was an example of the royal love of luxury. But nobody ever spared a thought for the money that was wasted on these expeditions and for the people who suffered during these.

The Expert Archer

One day, an archer came to Boud. He displayed his skills at night before the Raja sahib and many other important persons. His eyes were kept blindfolded when he displayed his skills. One

person gave a knock at a distance of about fifty cubits. Guessing from which direction the sound came, the archer shot his arrow at the target. He daubed the point of an arrow with a bit of quicklime and let it fly at a person's back. But the man was not at all hurt; only a thick mark of quicklime was left on his back. Fruits were tied to threads and suspended from a bamboo. He made all these fruits fall to the ground by shooting just one arrow at them. Placing seven arrows on lumps of earth at different places, he made all these arrows fall on the ground shooting only one arrow. In this way, he displayed many such amazing skills of an archer, which have been described in the *puranas*, and was warmly applauded by everyone. The Raja sahib awarded him two hundred rupees.

A Monkey Foretelling the Future

One day, two muslim gentlemen came to Banapur with a monkey. We were astonished when we found that the monkey was possessed of strange powers. He could say how many sons and daughters a person had, identify his son or daughter, and predict what the future held in store for him. Of course, he could not talk; he did all this through gestures made with his legs. These two gentlemen said that the monkey had acquired this power by prostrating itself, praying and fasting continuously before the *pir* at Kaipadara. This monkey had predicted that I would be blessed with a healthy son, and that a baby girl would be born to one of my colleagues. It is a matter of surprise that that both his predictions came true.

Educating My Children

I never craved for wealth and glory. My father was not a highly educated person. Though he lived in abject poverty, he was treated with respect by the villagers. I obtained M.A. and B.Ed degrees

through much hard work and perseverance. I tried my best to give higher education to all my children. I feel proud that my children are well educated. My eldest son, Jagannath Prasad, passed M.A. in political science from Allahabad University and was placed in the first class. He later joined Indian civil services. My second son, Krushna Prasad, did M.A. in English from Allahabad University. My youngest son, Raghunath Prasad, passed B.Tech from I.I.T., Kharagpur and later, he received an M.Tech degree from Roorkey Technical University. My daughter, Bishnupriya, works as a teacher. I had taken much pains to educate her at a time when girls' education was not widespread. Now her daughter has also earned an M.A. degree in political science from Utkal University. I feel very glad because they are all highly educated.

My Literary Activities

I always dreamt of becoming a poet when I was at school. I had written a few poems on the occasion of the Saraswati puja. These were published in the school magazine. I had even written a poem in Sanskrit and got it revised by Pundit Jagannath Rath. This too got published. A few of my poems were published in the *Sahakara*, a monthly literary magazine. I translated Scott's *Lady of the Lake* into Oriya, and sent it to Sri Balakrushna Kar, the editor of the *Sahakara*. He published two cantos from this in his magazine. Later, when he learnt that another translation of that poem was about to be published, he did not publish the remaining cantos. Later, the other translation came to be published under the title, *Sarasundari*. In fact, *Sarasundari* was much better than the translation I had done. I had written a poem titled, 'Dust' which was published in the fifth issue of the *Sahakara* in 1929. I felt that my poems lacked poetic fervour. However, while of living in Boud, I was compelled by circumstances to write a few poems to mark various occasions.

I took to writing prose. I wrote a few commentaries on and forewords to a few college textbooks and sent these to publishers. In this respect, I followed the example of Prof. Artaballabha Mohanty, the founder of *Prachi Samiti*, who was like a *guru* to me. Then I found that there were many educative books in English, which should be translated into Oriya. Of these, I first chose *Gulliver's Travels*, and then went on to render *Oliver Twist* into Oriya. The Government approved these two books as textbooks, and the publisher made huge profits out of them. I also received some money. I felt greatly encouraged by this and published translations of abridged versions of many English books and they became very popular. Even now, the publishing house, Grantha Mandir keeps bringing out these translated books as part of its 'World Literature Series'. Similarly, I translated into Oriya a few Sanskrit books like *Hitopadesh*, and *Panchatantra*. Of many such books I had written, a few came to be approved as textbooks. After textbooks got nationalised, the need to write such books no longer arose. So I compiled two dictionaries and edited two dictionaries, which had been published earlier.

Students' Store was compiling a few text-books. I gave two articles to them and received ten rupees by way of remuneration. Then I compiled for this publisher many other books. On the first year, I received more than eighty rupees as royalty for my book titled *Laghu Byakaran*. I received about one thousand rupees per year after my book *Sarbasara Byakarana* came to be published. The money I made by writing books exceeded what I received as my salary. This income from writing books was of great help when I built a house and purchased a plot of land at Banapur. But in 1948, the shareholders of Students' Store quarreled among themselves, parted ways and set up four or five separation bookstores. As a result, I no longer received any royalty from

Students' Store. I received around one thousand rupees for an article from the Board of Secondary Education, Government of Orissa, when it took up publishing text-books. I devoted myself to translating books and made a little money. I also received remuneration as a question-setter and examiner from Utkal University. Had I not earned money from these sources, the journey of my life would have become extremely difficult.

Life after Retirement

I had started my career as a teacher and had tried my best to equip myself for this vocation. After working for twenty-four years as a school-teacher, I became a lecturer in a college. Of course, I was offered lectureship in Ravenshaw College, but I did not accept it for fear that I would not be able to support my family in Cuttack with a meagre income. Later, I joined Christ College and performed my duties without any difficulty. The first principal of the college, Sri Brajananda Mohanty, was an ideal person. A peaceful atmosphere prevailed in the college due to his able and just management of its affairs. After his retirement, all kinds of problems cropped up, which continue to affect the college. Those who succeeded Brajananda babu lacked his sincerity and his nobility of character. I retired from the college in June 1968. I did not get anything except the money I had got deposited in my provident fund. Around this time, my wife underwent a serious operation and was admitted to the hospital. So I thought better of protesting against the injustice and chose to keep quiet.

The rice, which I used to receive from the farmlands at Banapur every year, was enough for my small family. All my three sons were working at different places. At home, there were only three of us: I myself, my wife and a servant. I constructed a house with the money I got by selling my land in Banapur and from my

provident fund. I decided to support my family somehow by letting out a part of the house after I got it constructed. I also made a little money by translating books. At least, I managed to escape abject poverty. In 1970, I borrowed a little money for the wedding of my second son, but I repaid the debt in a short time. Self-reliance was the source of my strength as well as my weakness. Though my sons earned quite a lot, I never asked them to help me. But I once went to the law court when a tenant did not pay the rent for three years and refused to vacate the house. I did not succeed in getting the rent arrears and I also had to pay my lawyer his fees. On that occasion, I had received help from my eldest son.

After retirement, I spent most of the time either writing or reading books. I read novels, short stories and books on a variety of subjects. These not only helped me pass the time, they also enabled me to earn a little money by writing books. But, around 1978, my eyes started giving me trouble, and around 1980 my eyesight almost failed. It was not possible for me either to read or write. Medical tests revealed that one of my eyes was completely damaged and that the other one might improve slightly through surgery. But I was not in a position to afford the operation and I was not sure if my youngest son, who was staying with me could spare the time to look after me after the operation. On account of my eye problems, I was compelled to remain idle.

Honours Received

I have already said that I always wanted to write books, even if I earned very little from writing. When the government nationalized textbook publication, I devoted myself to translating mainly English and Sanskrit texts into Oriya. I did not make much money out of this activity, either. But these translated books were educative and they touched the hearts of young students. But

nobody regarded it as a significant contribution to children's literature. However, my work brought me recognition. .

The diamond jubilee of Utkal Sahitya Samaj was held in 1972, and, on this occasion, I, along with others, received a letter of appreciation. I remember that Pundit Banamber Acharya and Dr Radhacharan Panda, were among all those who had been felicitated on this occasion.

In 1974, while going through an article in the magazine, *The Soviet Land*, I came across an advertisement. I learnt from it, like every year, after the death of Pundit Jawaharlal Nehru, this year, too, prizes would be given on behalf of the Indo-Soviet Friendship Society. The prize amounted to five thousand rupees. Ten special prizes each amounting to fifteen hundred rupees had also been instituted. Translation of Russian literature into an Indian language was also one of the categories for which a prize was to be given. By this time four of my translations from Russian literature- *Tolstoy's Stories- I*, *Tolstoy's Stories-II*, *Gorky's Stories*, and *Chekov's Stories* - had already been published. I wanted to submit these four books for the competition. Four copies of each book were to be despatched. I asked the publisher to supply me with four copies of each book. But he discouraged me and dissuaded me from sending books worth fifty rupees unnecessarily. For my part, I too was not optimistic. However, one of my friends brought me four copies of each title and I sent these. The prizes were awarded on 14 November, on the birthday of Jawaharlal Nehru. The awardees had been informed of the decision. One or two day after 14 November, I came across the list of the names of the winners from the newspaper and the names of those who had received the prizes from the Vice-President. Immediately I wrote a letter to the secretary of the society saying that I should have been informed that I had won the prize. I received a reply telling

me that a letter had been sent to me earlier, and a copy of that letter was also enclosed for my reference. I wrote to him requesting that the prize money be sent to me, but I received a letter saying that it would be given to me at Cuttack through the Calcutta branch of the Society. About two months later, an official of 'The Soviet Land' came to Cuttack from Calcutta. A meeting was held at ISCS office at Barabati stadium and I was presented with a certificate, a bronze medal and a cheque for one thousand and five hundred rupees. The details of this meeting with photographs were published in one of the issues of the *Soviet Land*.

Narayan Mohapatra was among the litterateurs who had been felicitated by Orissa Sahitya Academy in 1972. We had co-authored many grammar books and a book titled *Bibidha Kosha*. He had not written any other book on his own. Many wondered how Orissa Sahitya Academi felicitated him instead of me. May be for this reason, in 1978, I was felicitated and was presented with a shawl and a letter of appreciation by the Academy.

I retired from Christ College in the summer of 1968. The lecturers organised a small meeting to bid me farewell. After many years, perhaps, at the initiative of some lecturers of this college, the *Oriya Sahitya Samaj* (Oriya Literary Society) of the college held a meeting and felicitated me.

My Beliefs and Experiences

I have always looked upon myself as a leaf floating down a stream. I never knew which direction my life would take. During the First World War, I tried to go to Mesopotamia, but failed on account of being underage. Although Lakshminaryan Sahu had got the famous Oriya businessman of Rangoon, G.S.Behera, to promise to send me to Japan to learn glass technology, the plan did not materialise for some reason. I tried to become a member

of Servants of India Society. As I was not a graduate at the time, my application for membership was rejected. I have not kept count of the number of times I have met with failure in life. I succeeded only when I tried very hard to become a qualified teacher. This job took me to many places. In the end, I have got stuck in Cuttack. What direction my floating life-leaf will take and who guides it, I don't know. Now, at the dusk of my life, I feel utterly helpless. At times, I feel I am the most helpless creature on earth. I have slept in a hut and also lived in *pucca* house made of bricks. I have endured biting cold unable to afford warm clothing, and I have also warmed myself under shawls worth hundreds of rupees. I have walked hundreds of miles on foot, and have also rode on horses, elephants and motor cars.

I have watched silent films and talkies. On television, I have watched man landing on the moon and bringing stones from there. I have eaten plain rice and also rice cooked in ghee. I do not know if I have become a poor man or a rich man. Rich and poor are relative terms after all. Someone, who seems rich compared with one person, may seem poor compared with another. Similarly, I cannot decide whether I am happy or unhappy. Many of my contemporaries have left for their heavenly abodes. I have looked upon some of them as happy; but it is hard to say if they were really happy when they were alive. I have often considered myself utterly unhappy. But I cannot say whether there are people who are not unhappier than me. Perhaps, like light and darkness, happiness and unhappiness complement, and co-exist with, each other.

I do not know if I am a sinner or a pious man. There are no yardsticks with the help of which virtue and vice could be measured. So, what seems pious from one point of view may appear sinful from another. To me, only what is approved by our own conscience is virtuous. From this point of view, I do not regard

myself a grave sinner.

Mahatma Gandhi once said, "A person who saves more wealth than what he needs is guilty of theft." But here the question arises as to how can one decide how much one needs? Fifty rupees might be enough for one person; even one lakh rupees may not suffice another. Thus, it is difficult to follow this advice. Bipinbehari Ray, our philosophy teacher, once said, "We survive by taking help from others in society. So we are morally indebted to our families and society. It is man's duty to repay this moral debt according to his capacity." I subscribe to this view. I have never tried to earn merit and I do not know how to earn it. Many people perform religious rites, but I never believe in these. I have always tried to do my duty and, whenever I have failed, I thought it was the will of God. There was a time when I was an atheist. But now I have come to rely on God: "Oh Lord Hrushikesh, who reside in my heart, I will follow the commands you give me.'

Perhaps this dependence on God has resulted from a feeling of helplessness.

A Leaf in the Stream

The leaf of my life has drifted a long way down the stream of time. It has joined hundreds of other leaves on its way and it has drifted away from them. Some leaves have already sunk. One day, this leaf too will sink suddenly and disappear. Its existence will be blotted out. Who knows what would happen after that? I know my time is up. I do not know what lies beyond death, but one has to believe in the consequences of one's actions.

How am I going to face God? I have spent my life any other animal. So all I can do now is to ask for God's forgiveness and mercy.



Glossary

Anna- One sixteenth of a rupee. One rupee was sixteen *annas*, no longer in use.

Bahadur- Title of honour conferred on a person by the government.

Cuttackia- Any person belonging to the coastal districts of Orissa is called a 'Cuttackia' by people of Western Orissa.

Makadami rights- Rights of a *makadam*, that is, a revenue-collector under a Zamindar.

Makatab- An indigenous school for Muslims.

Mogulabandi - The three coastal districts of Orissa, namely, Cuttack, Puri and Balasore, which were formerly under the direct administration of Mogul Emperors.

tol- These were the indigenous institutions of the country for the prosecution of Sanskrit studies and various branches of Hindu learning.

Sarbarakar- A rent-collecting officer or agent of the government.



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In *A Leaf in the Stream* a self-effacing man reminisces about his struggle for survival without bitterness, without regret. He continues to cherish certain principles and values even when the future becomes uncertain and dire poverty stares him in the face. He takes risks, too many and too often, even when the stakes are high. He tells the story of his struggle with humour and humility, qualities that enable him to emerge as a sharply observant witness to an eventful era. His autobiography offers fascinating glimpses of the educational system in India under British rule, life in a feudatory state in Orissa and the world of Oriya publishing. To read this book is to witness the unfolding of a society's change.

Sridhar Das

A Leaf in the Stream

An Autobiography

Sridhar Das (1901-1988) was an eminent educationist, a noted lexicographer and translator.

Mary Mohanty teaches English at Government Women's College, Puri.

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